

nanasense

nonsense

verses of

J P DAS



translated
with an
introduction by
Sumanyu Satpathy

illustrated by
Priyadarshi Patnaik

J.P. Das is a poet, fiction writer and playwright in Odia. He was educated at the University of Utkal and Allahabad, and did his doctorate in Art History. Beginning his career as a teacher, he then joined the Indian Administrative Service, which he later left to pursue research and creative writing. Besides poetry, novels and plays he has also written several books on Orissan art. His collection of poems for children and nonsense poems include *Alimalika*, *Alukuchi-Malukuchi* and *Anabana*. His works have been widely translated into Hindi, English and other Indian languages. He has been honoured with many awards including Sahitya Akademi and Saraswati Samman.

Sumanyu Satpathy is currently Professor and Head, Department of English, University of Delhi, India. His publications have been mostly around Modernism, Queer Studies, Postcolonialism, and Literary Nonsense, both in English and Odia. Among his published works are *Reading Literary Cultures: Perspectives from Orissa*, *Southern Postcolonialisms: 'New' Literary Representations and the Global South* (ed) and *The Tenth Rasa: An Anthology of Indian Nonsense* (co-ed). His articles have appeared in edited volumes such as *Children's Literature* and the *Fin de Siècle* and *Same Sex Love in India*, as well as in journals. As a visiting faculty, he has lectured widely at universities in India and abroad. He was a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, La Trobe University.

Priyadarshi Patnaik is Professor at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Kharagpur, where he teaches literature, communication and visual aesthetics. His research interests include Indian aesthetics, meditation traditions, visual & nonverbal art and communication, and translation. Writer, painter, translator and photographer, his poems and short-fiction have appeared in various journals published both in India and abroad. He has published two anthologies of poetry, a critical work on Indian aesthetics and co-edited two volumes on *Aging and Dying* and *Time in the Indian Context*. His paintings, designs and illustrations have appeared in a number of national and international journals and volumes.

NANASENSE

Nonsense Verses of JP Das

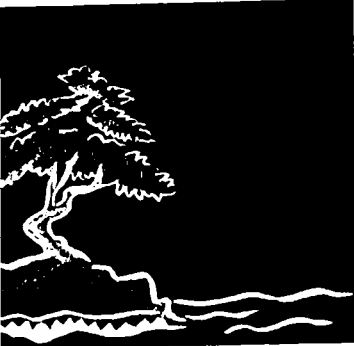


Translated with an Introduction by
SUMANYU SATPATHY

Illustrated by
PRIYADARSHI PATNAIK



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A selection from the author's works in Odia language.

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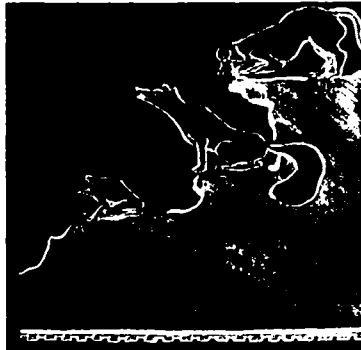
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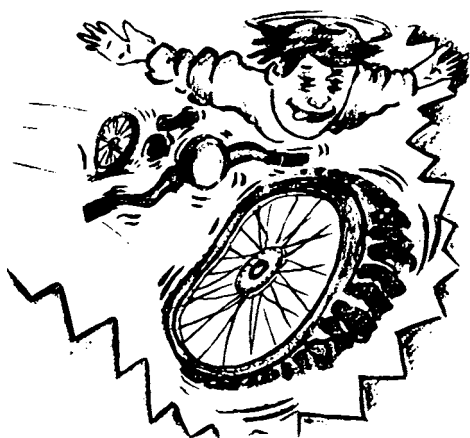
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Introduction

“JP Da -

What else do you expect from me!”

Gulzar 28.11.2007

(Gulzar’s inscription on the title page of the book, *Complete Nonsense* by Edward Lear that he gifted to JP on that date)

The gift of an iconic book of nonsense by Gulzar to a fellow writer and the self-deprecating irony in his words for the addressee, all suggest not only the collaborative enterprise that nonsense is, but also the essential desire on the part of serious-minded artists to occasionally embrace the world of nonsense as a relief from the world of sense; the need, that is, to abandon the search for meaning in a chaotic world in favour of the happy and capricious world of nonsense, where even death cannot be taken seriously.

I discovered JP’s nonsense while researching on Indian nonsense many years ago, which eventually resulted, among other things, in *The Tenth Rasa* (Penguin 2007), a co-edited anthology. Jagannath Prasad Das, popularly known as JP, is one of the very few major Odia writers who has produced works in non-canonical genres like children’s writing and nonsense. Most of the well-established poets in Odisha have avoided writing for children, unlike their predecessors, such as Fakir Mohan Senapati and Madhusudan Rao, even unlike their contemporary Bengali and Marathi counterparts. As a result of such neglect at the hands of competent poets, children’s literature in Odia has been languishing for decades. What passes for writing for children is a vast body of unimaginative jingles, informative, didactic or pedagogic rhymes, and fables.

Odia children's verse, known as nanabaya (*Chhele Bhulano Chhoda* in Bangla) was dominated by Nanda Kishore Bal (1875-1928), who is even now considered to be a pioneer in the field. Some of his main works are *Nido Khudi*, *Bilacy Nani*, *Kala Kuaa* and *Nanabaya Geeta* is a priceless collection of children's poetry in Odia Literature. The last mentioned collection, *Nanabaya Geeta* gave children's rhyme the name, and evolved the literary tradition of *Nanabaya* with the example of the English nursery rhymes and the Bangla *chhoda*.

The less said about Odia nonsense the better. Bereft of humour, it is all unintentional nonsense. Since nonsense, like nursery rhymes and other forms of children's verse, constitutes pre-primary pedagogic tools, as far as Odia is concerned, the choice is severely limited. Much of the publication for pedagogic purposes happens at the governmental level. The cultural referents and signifiers in age-old lullabies and nonsense verses do not make sense to contemporary children; nor do they form any part of the modern Odia child's imagination. For example,

What fun, see! The bear hums!
And dances to the beating drums!
Or
Here enters the bear singing
See, the kids burst out laughing!

(This as well the rest of the translations here are mine)

Mostly didactic in their orientation and motive, there is little that can be called humorous here, and is certainly not nonsense in the sense in which the term is invoked to refer to the work of Edward Lear or Lewis Carroll. For instance, the rhyme, "Dho Re Baiya dho!" goes thus (in my translation):

Go, boogey man, go!
Sleep on those fields
Where thick millets grow.

Like numerous others, this is clearly modelled on English nursery rhymes such as:

I'm your Boogie Man
That's what I am
And I'm here to do
Whatever I can
Be it early mornin'
Late afternoon
Or at midnight
It's never too soon

"Boogey Man" is English equivalent for the Odia, "Baya". Whether or not these lines in "Dho rey Baya" make any sense, the music still appeals to the young minds. One of the better known rhymes adapted by Nanda Kishor Bal carries some lines which are clearly a nonsense rhyme: "The high mountains are curled, curled on which is seated the Tri-gnarled". Lines such as these suggest how traditional rhymes in Odia carried the seeds of 20th century literary nonsense, but were not fully exploited until JP accepted the challenge.

Nonsense writing in Odia comes of age, if at all, only in the last decades of the 20th century in the hands of such writers as Phaturaananda (pseudonym of Ramachandra Mishra), Udaynath Padhi, Krushna Charan Behera, JP, Jagnadatta Arya, Das Benhur, and Niranjana Behera. Of these only JP, Behera and Jagnadutta have studied the tradition of nonsense in English and Bangla. Much nonsense-like satirical verse in the limerick form appeared in the magazine *Dagar* from the late 1970s onward. Adopting the pseudonym of "Shrustichhada" Krushna Charan Behera published the first-ever book of limericks called *Laghupanchak* (1983). Jagnadutta Arya ought to be considered one of the earliest critics of the limerick form in Odia, and as such the earliest critic of Odia nonsense when he published his essay, "*Laghupanchaka: A Study*" in the December issue of *Dagar* (1980).

In an interview with the present translator, JP had pointed out, “Unfortunately, nonsense is not taken seriously as a literary genre in Odia. As a matter of fact when I published *Alimalika*, friends commented that Odia readers would stop considering me as a serious writer. When I included my nonsense poems in a poetry anthology, one reviewer wondered what these pieces were doing in this otherwise serious book!”

JP apart, only a few Odia writers have even *thought* seriously about the genre. Among these, Ramakrishna Nanda, one of the best-known writers and editors of children’s books and magazines has said about children’s verses that “children do not understand much, they understand through what they see and hear; hence the need for illustration and alliteration. Odia children’s poetry is composed, for sound effect, both similar and dissimilar rhymes. Even when rhyme occurs, the lines do not carry equal number of letters. So, the singing voice has to be modulated....” This is largely true of the traditional rhymes and metre used by poets like Nanda Kishore Bal. The lack of illustration is another aspect of many children’s verses in Odia. The practice of publishing illustrated rhymes, which became highly developed in Bengali literary culture early in the 20th Century, was a rarity in Odia until more recently.

JP was born in 1936. He started writing poetry early, and his poems began to appear in periodicals when he was barely in college. After completing his studies in Political Science from the prestigious Ravenshaw College and Allahabad University in the 1950s, he joined the Indian Administrative Service, and continued to write poetry. In time, he would go on to write plays, short fiction, Odia art criticism and history and at least one novel. His unquestioned versatility has resulted in numerous books in these various genres, nonsense being one of them.

JP’s sense of humour which makes a not so infrequent appearance in his fiction, and drama, was allowed full play when he attempted yet another genre that of children’s writing. He was always interested in children’s writing, especially in the genre of nonsense. His favourite

authors from among those to have practised the form are Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear and Ogden Nash from the English speaking world, and Sukumar Ray and Annada Sankar Ray, as well as Tagore. His favourite forms in the genre were the limerick and clerihew. For years he had kept in touch with these, but never attempted the form.

JP published two collections of his nonsense verse: *Alukuchi Malukuchi* and *Alimalika*, both in 1993, with illustrations, not his in the latter. In these two earlier works, as well as the more recently published third collection, *Anabana*, JP adapted both traditional *nanabaya* and, and the English models to suit his postcolonial context. The following limericks from *Alimalika* are nonsense pure and simple:

From Bhimkhol, one Bhagirathi Bhaina
Desired a voyage to China,
But couldn't quite find
Avisa, so dined
At the zoo, staring at the hyena.

Or

Short of temper was Professor Kar
Blood rushed to his head, oft, therefor
When mad with despair
He pulled at his hair
Till his head went as bald as the Thar.

In all these verses, JP has experimented with bilingual puns like Sukumar Ray (such as the rhyme, "Breaking the Rule"), or many of the Western forms such as those favoured by Lear. For example, in the following verse on the cock, certain features of Learean nonsense are clearly discernible:

Taught to say ku-ku-du-koo, ku-ku-du-koo
He only said, 'cock-a-doodle-doo'
Such a vain cock—
You're in for a shock:
Not tandoori, you'll only be stew.

Here the form that JP uses is that of the limerick, foreign to Odia verse technique. Though nonsense rhymes of this kind are not native to Odisha's literary tradition, JP uses elements of traditional rhymes (such as can be seen in "The Clever Jackal") and folklore to create modern literary nonsense. Similarly, his experience in dak bungalows of Odisha must have contributed to the following rhyme:

As soon as I'd put out the light
 I saw a squadron of mosquitoes alight.
 They'd have flown me to space,
 But I was held in place
 by a billion bedbugs holding me tight.

The reason why he had avoided writing for children earlier was because, he says, he found it a most daunting enterprise. His eventual decision to undertake the challenge, of composing witty and humorous verses for children, was prompted by a physical circumstance, as had been the case with writers like Lear, Sukumar Ray and Fakir Mohan before him. Sometime in 1991, JP was bed-ridden for several months, with a nagging back pain. Eventually, he had to go for a risky spinal surgery. It was during this period that he found it impossible to sit up at his writing desk in his study. The only way he could have prevented his pen from rusting was to write short verses while lying on the bed. As he says himself, "In 1991, I was bedridden after a slipped disc surgery, and when I could not sit at my table and do any serious writing, I devoted myself to writing short rhymes and nonsense poems. Many of them were inspired by Carroll et al, but I also took recourse to bilingual puns as a major component [in my new work]. I also experimented with forms like haiku, limericks, parodies and clerihews in Odia. I had great fun with animal sounds which have special words in Oriya- "bho" for dog, "may may" for goat, "hun han" for owl, "katar kay" for frog and so on. I tried to meld them into some of my nonsense verses."

Indeed, one of the important reasons why JP's nonsense works

is because he understands the genre very well and knows the rules of the game. He uses all possible strategies of nonsense: linguistic puns, bilingualism, word-play, colloquial expressions, and above all parodic sense. These are of course all linguistic and literary strategies. As he says, "I have been fascinated with words from my childhood. Puns, wordplays, riddles, rhymes—in Odia, English, Sanskrit—were things I enjoyed creating and solving. Working crossword puzzles has been one of my hobbies." He shares his love for nonsense with the celebrated Urdu poet, Gulzar, whose poetry he has translated into English. When asked about whether he has shared his nonsense verse with Gulzar, JP said, "I am sure nonsense has its own niche audience and devoted addicts. Gulzar, who has himself written some great nonsense, and I used to exchange our nonsense verses to each other's delight. Once he had presented me Lear's 'Complete nonsense' with a sweet note: 'What else did you expect from me?'"

Again, as is not unusual with the tradition of good writings for children, whether sense or nonsense, JP's writings for children are equally entertaining and diverting for adult readers. Importantly, it is his deliberate attempt to eschew didacticism, the bane of most Odia children's writing that endears him to the adult and child reader alike. His nonsense can be divided into two broad categories: one comprises verses that are primarily meant for children, but that are eminently enjoyable by the adult readership as well. Second, verses which appeal to the informed adult, but which not all young adult readers would enjoy or comprehend. For, these latter kind of nonsense verses depend on allusion and cerebration. Many pieces in *Alukuchi Malikuchi* belong to the second category. A few of his clerihews and pieces such as "Transtaitor" and "The Girl from Cuttack" may prove to be difficult, if not incomprehensible for children.

JP's nonsense works also because of his own sense of enjoyment. Again, to quote him from the interview, "I equally enjoyed nonsense writings and became a devotee of Carroll, Lear and Nash, and of course Sukumar Ray. However I had never seriously thought of writing literary nonsense myself. I had fun writing them and always

hoped readers would have as much fun reading them.”

The task of translating nonsense poses far greater challenge to the translator than do any other genres. The reasons are that word puns in the original depend on the resources of the source culture, cultural practices, codes and the auditory imagination. While translating, the register of the target language could be very different, and the replacement words may not yield similar kinds of witticisms. Even when the equivalent adjustments are made, the source of fun may be quite different.

Finally, I must acknowledge a debt of gratitude to fellow nonsense scholars and translators: though not too many in India, yet one too many to name here. My grateful thanks are reserved for the prospective readers of the volume. I also thank the first readers of the pieces, my grandchildren, when they were in draft stage (ambiguity intended):

Sutanu and Saswat

Sidharth and Nutkhut

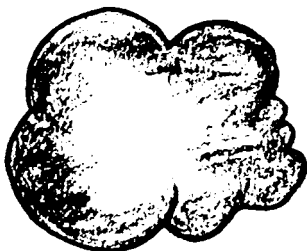
Sneha and Khushi

Litu and Nishi

Saais, Lipi and Chutput

I am grateful to JP, who allowed me to ruin his originals through my mistranslations. I am also grateful to the illustrator, Priyadarshi, who most graciously accepted my request to experiment with nonsense illustration. The results are there for everyone to see.

SUMANYU SATPATHY



Illustrator's Note

Every translation is an interpretation and every illustration is both translation and interpretation. First you try to evoke the meaning of the words in some way, but since there are no visual guidelines, you devise your own way. More important is to try and capture in one medium (lines) what has been said in another (words). A continuity, a flow of words in time has to be frozen in pictorial space. When the writer describes something, it is easy to capture in images, since it is only a word-picture. Thus, the illustration emerges into its own, and, as if, occupies the central position – for words are never adequate, in their temporal flow, to capture images. But in story telling, in sequential narrative, where time moves among words, an illustration is a supplement, an appendix often inadequate, usually unsuccessful. It is at such moments that illustration is almost impossible, for how do you capture the flow of time in images! You only capture a slice of time – freeze it in space.

A successful illustration, in capturing a story, is a complex of cause and effect, of loose ends, of suggestions where what happened and what is to happen are indicated – you suggest possibilities through the image. Or else a climactic point is caught. The rest is left to imagination. Thus, a consummate illustration holds a symbiotic relation with its textual mother. It provides an image or set of images, a vision. But it doesn't restrict the play of meaning, of ambiguities, of alternative interpretations that are so important to literary pleasure. A third possibility exists. A playful text, which has potentials that cannot be ever captured in words, can be captured in images. The fourth is one where the image and the words become inseparable, one feeding the other, in a self-referential loop. One is forced to think within the play of words and lines. I can think of only

four such illustrations in this book which fulfill – although partially – these paradigms I have set for myself. “Babu Nabarang,” with the image of a map suggests possibilities in a chain of events. “Sadanand Satpathy,” captures the climactic point of the poem where the character has already achieved *sadgati*. In “The Reviewer” the meaning of the poem is illustrated by the lines which enter the poem and become a part of it.

But all this is very difficult to achieve consistently. An illustration is born of words, but freezes the play of meaning and associations. The reader is provided only one set of interpretations, one image, one description, one person, character, possibility out of a possible infinite that could have been evoked in the reader’s mind in the absence of the illustration.

In this extremely creative long-distance association with two very creative minds – Sri J P Das and Professor Sumanyu Satpathy, one writing, the other trans-creating, I have perhaps failed to achieve, most of the time, the four ideals I have set forth above. However, this opportunity as well as their patience and valuable suggestions, have allowed me to learn a lot and to enter with lines and textures the playful game of words that makes up this delightful text.

PRIYADARSHI PATNAIK

Part I



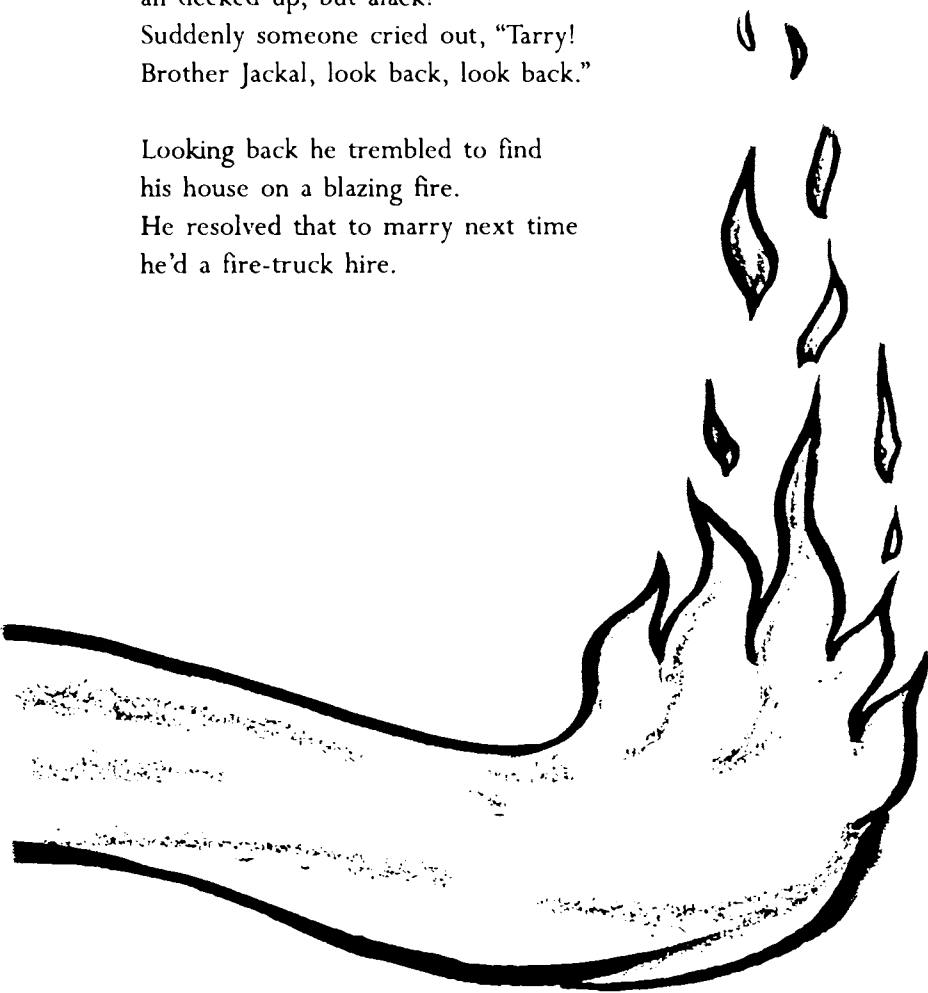
BEASTORIES



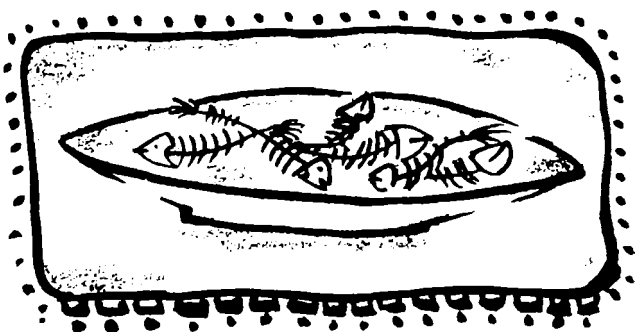
The Clever Jackal

It was rainy; it was sunny.
 (Wasn't that very, very funny?)
 Brother Jackal set out to marry
 all decked up, but alack!
 Suddenly someone cried out, "Tarry!
 Brother Jackal, look back, look back."

Looking back he trembled to find
 his house on a blazing fire.
 He resolved that to marry next time
 he'd a fire-truck hire.







Sister Pussy

Sister Pussy is on a fast.
 Having devoured one rat last,
 and lick'd two insects and three whole flies,
 she is famished still, and shies,
 and wonders where yet she might find
 four lizards, and five fishes
 to put her fast behind.



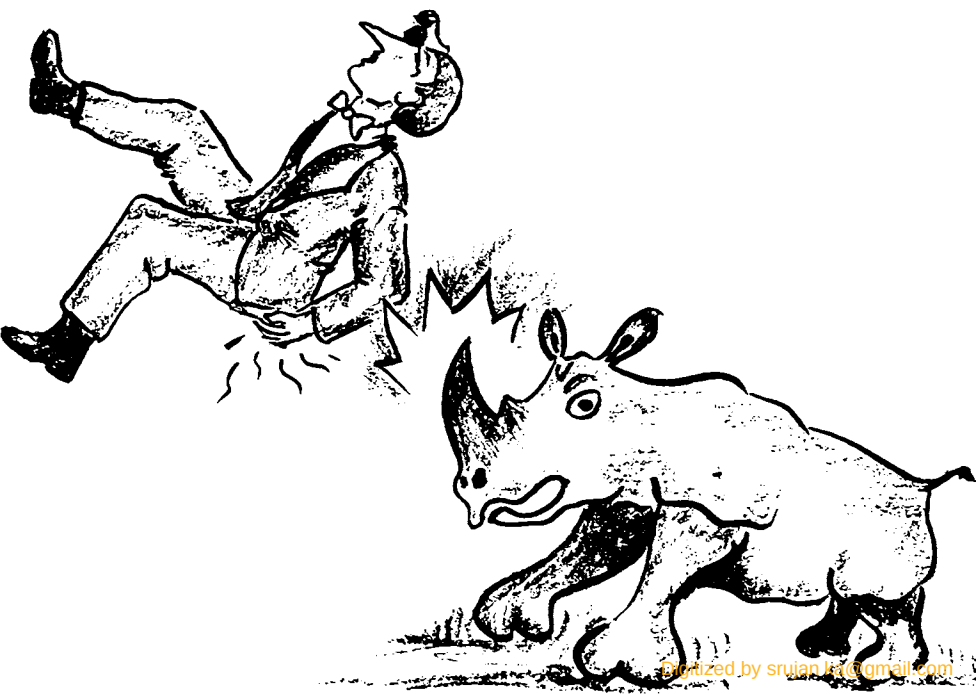
The Story of a Macaque

There once lived a macaque
with his wife in Cuttaque.
There the wife to heaven ascended.
And thus my story's ended.



This Nose Knows

With a sword-like nose
he looks a proper hero.
With a nose-like sword
the rhinoceros—a zero!



The Ferry Query

Question:

Tiger, boatman, betel leaves, goat
had to cross the river in a boat.

Only two at a time the boat could take.

To carry all four how many trips did it make?





Answer:

The goat ate the betel leaves.

The boatman ate the goat.

The tiger ate the boatman
and got up the boat.

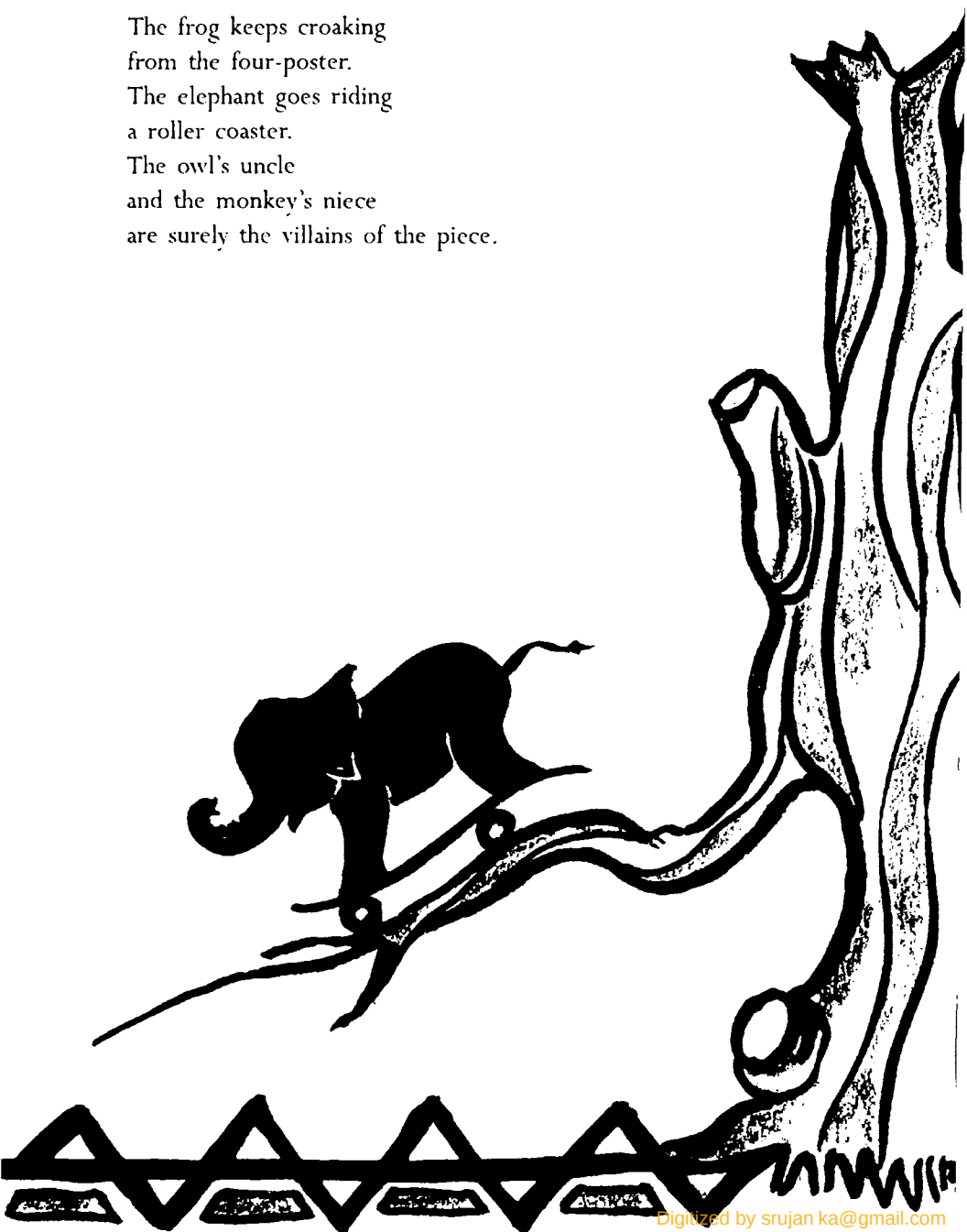
Thus all the four to take
it had just a single trip to make.



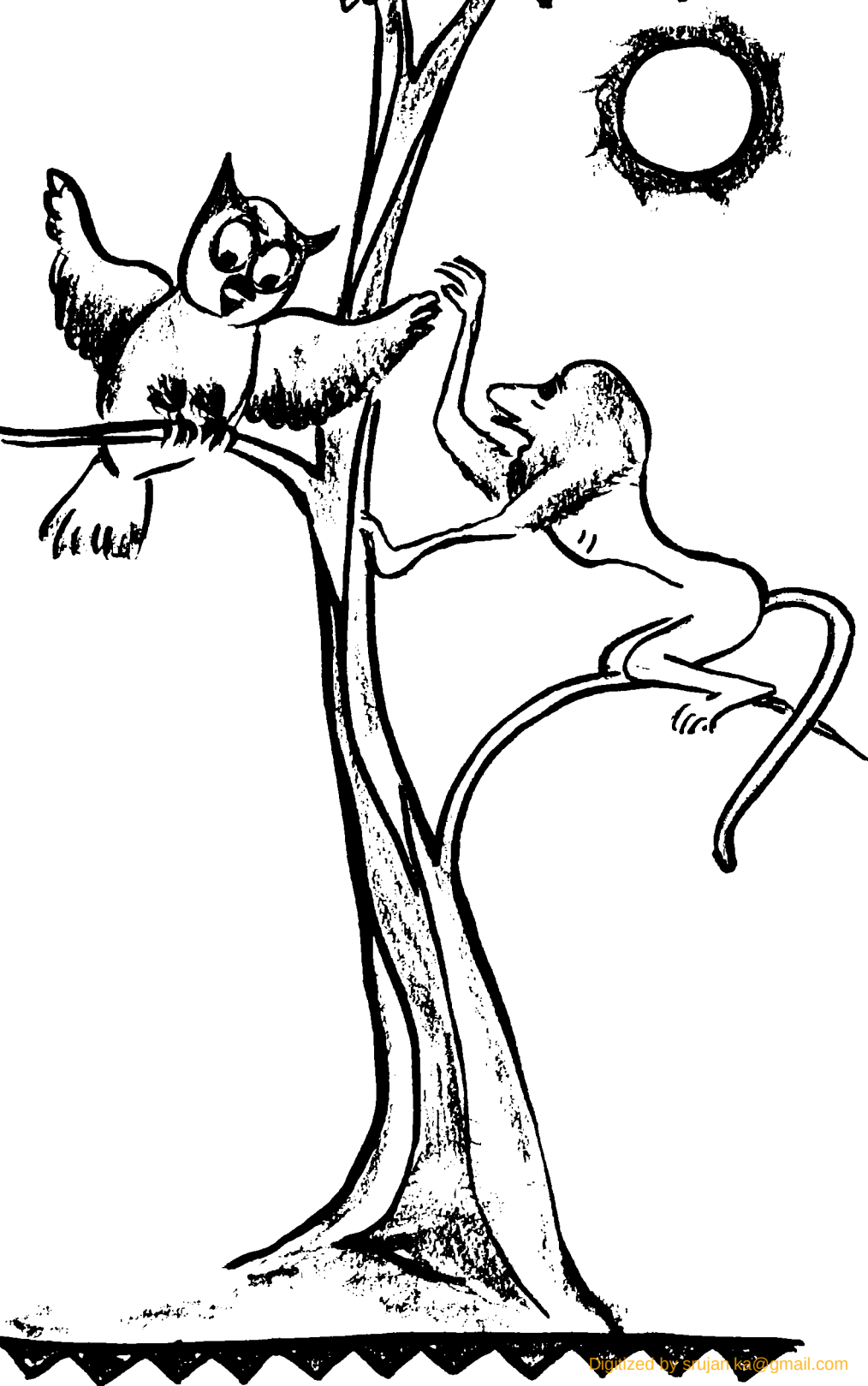


Jungle-A-fair

The frog keeps croaking
from the four-poster.
The elephant goes riding
a roller coaster.
The owl's uncle
and the monkey's niece
are surely the villains of the piece.







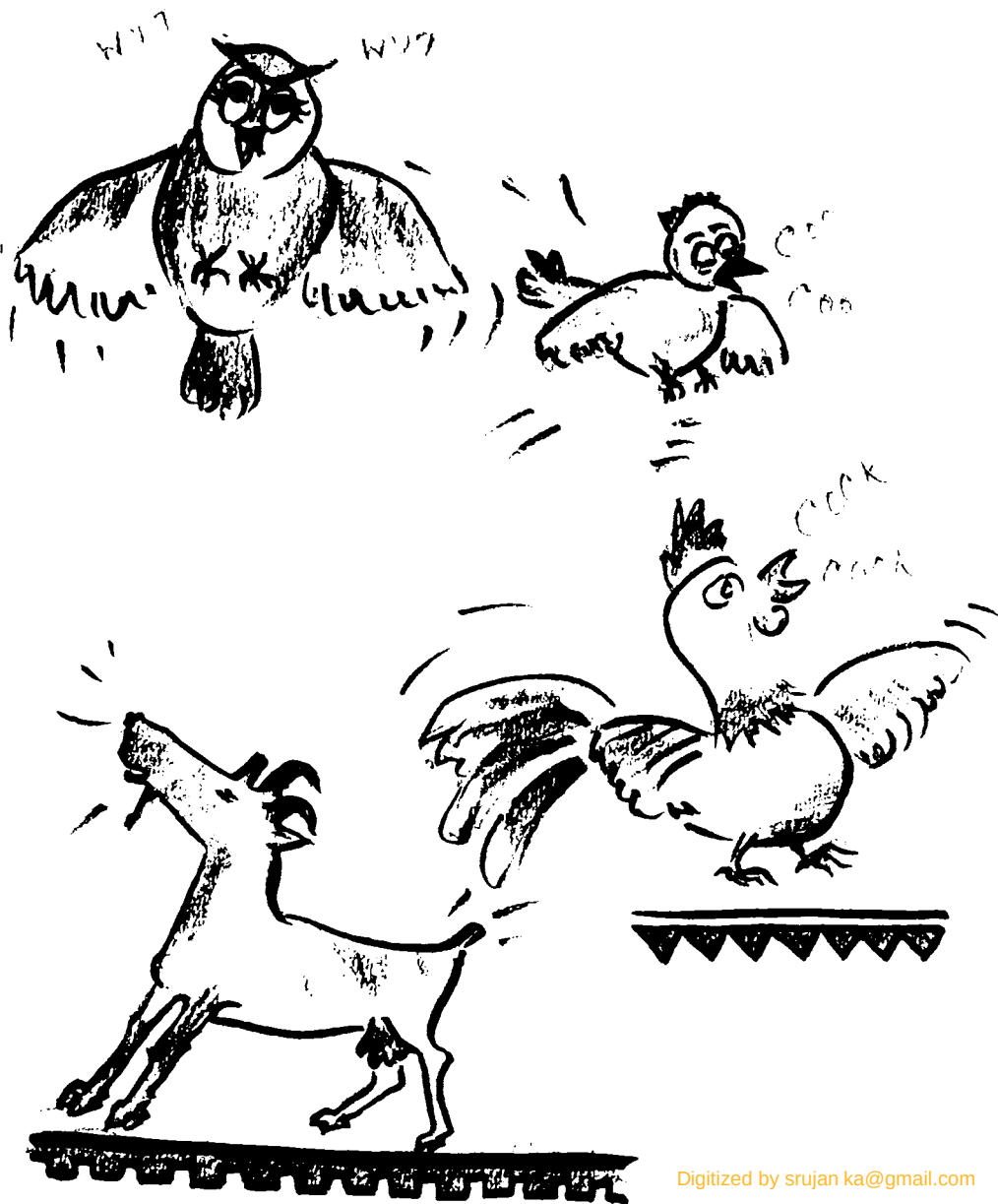
The Owl and the Baboon

Two friends lived on a big *jamoan*:
a fat owl and a thin baboon.

They quarreled violently
and then lived silently.

They only suffered from morn to noon.





In the English Test

"Who are you?" asked the teacher
of the cattle and the birds of feather.

"Cock, cock", guessed the fowl.

"Coo coo", fumbled the koel.

"Me, me", muttered the goat.

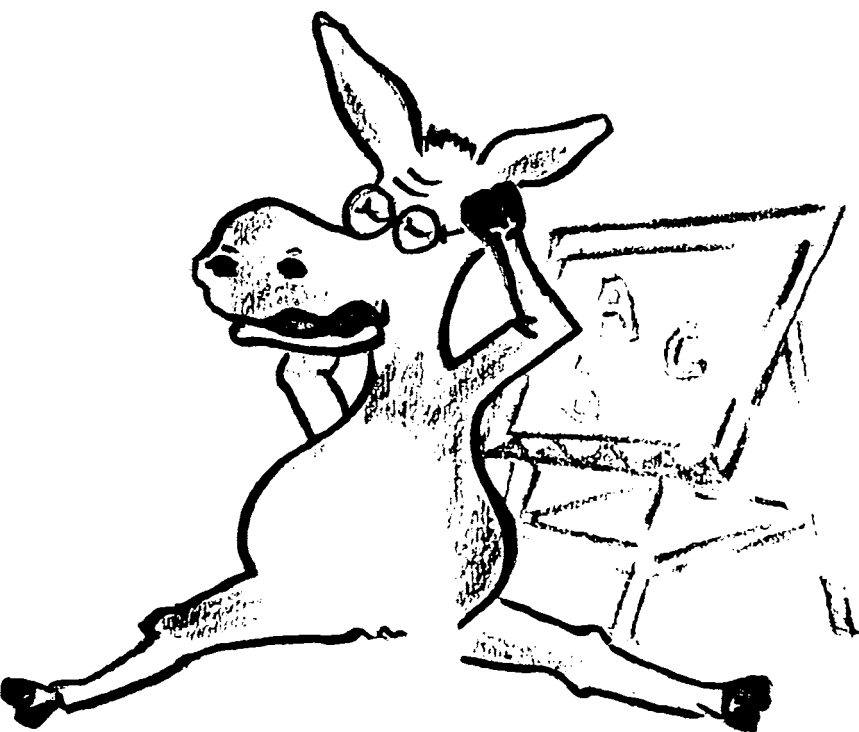
"Wot? Who?" jumbled the owl.

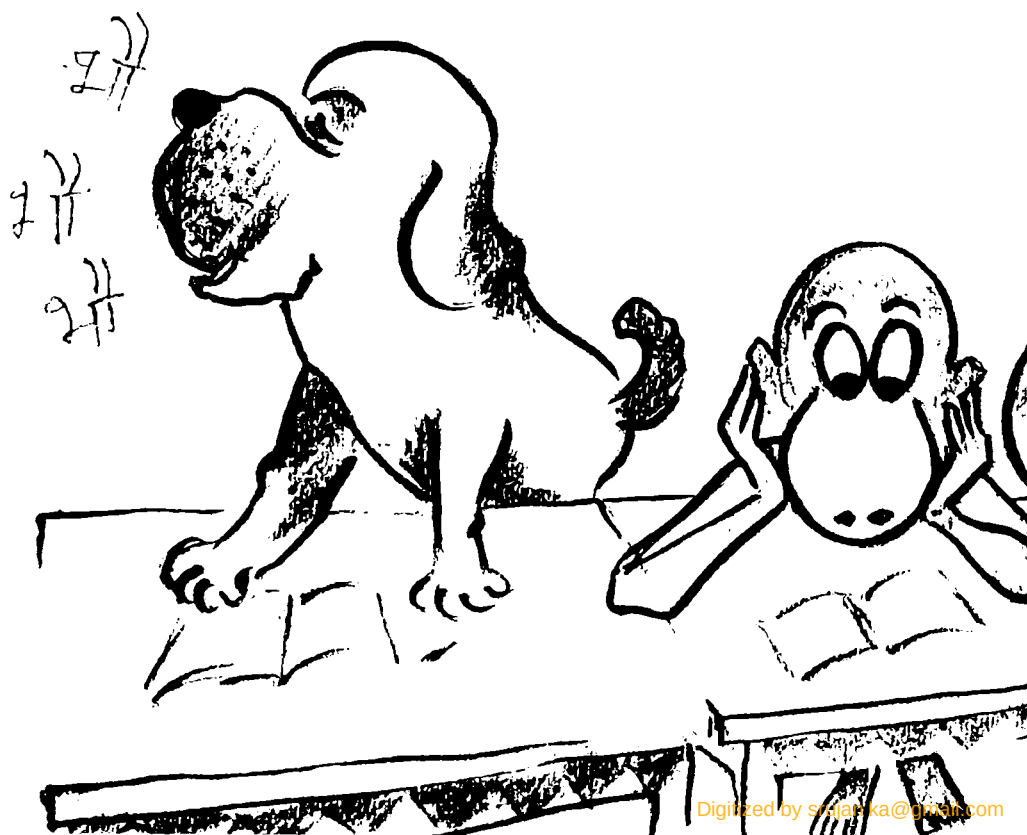
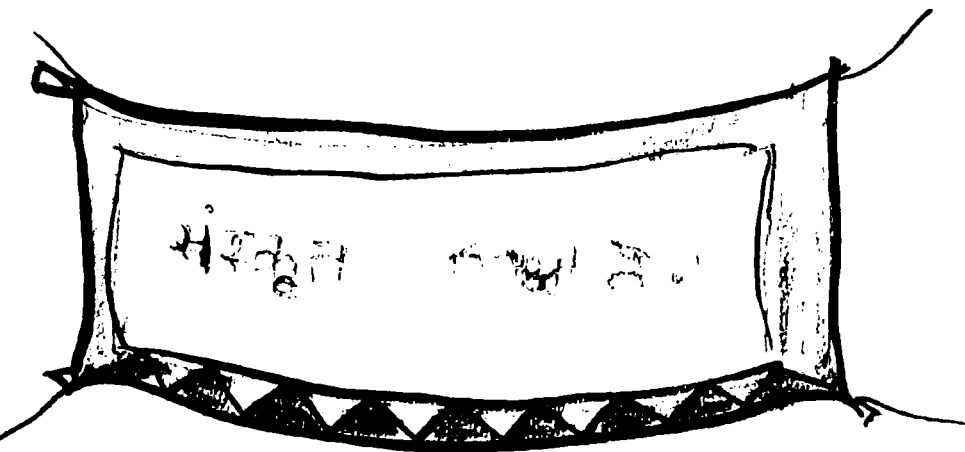
The cock got an 'A'.

The koel 'B'.

The goat 'C'.

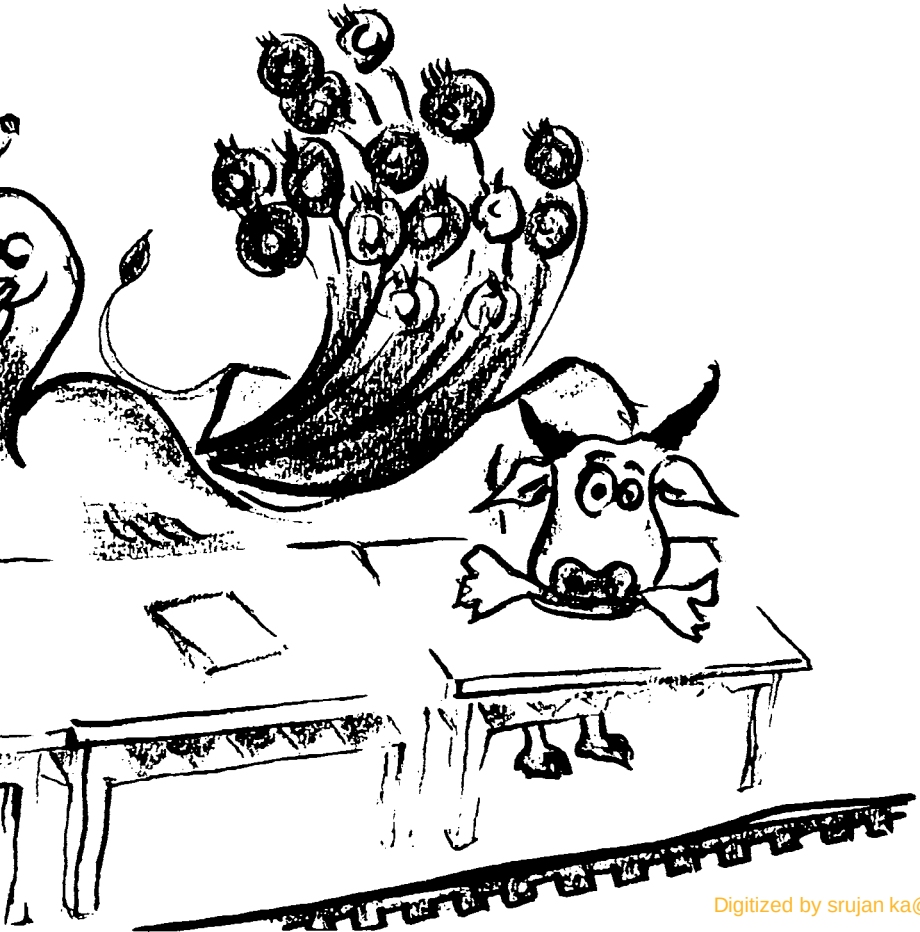
And the owl got a 'D'.





The Sanskrit Test

In a class for the Sanskrit test
all were trying their very best:
cows, and crows and dogs and donkeys,
cuckoos and peacocks, mynahs and monkeys.
They all muttered and chattered and mewed,
croaked and cawed and quacked and mooed.
But only the dog said, Bhoh, bhoh! to the teacher.
He alone passed the clever creature.





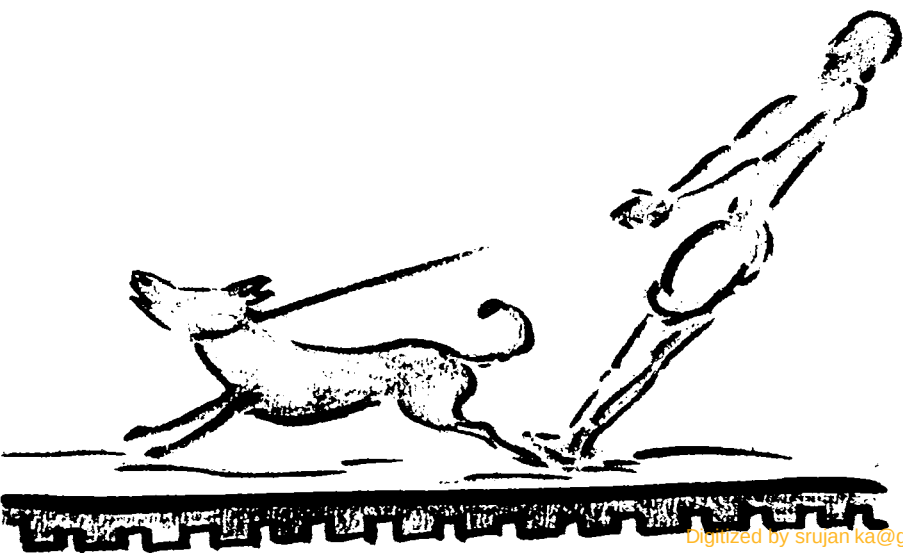
The Underdog

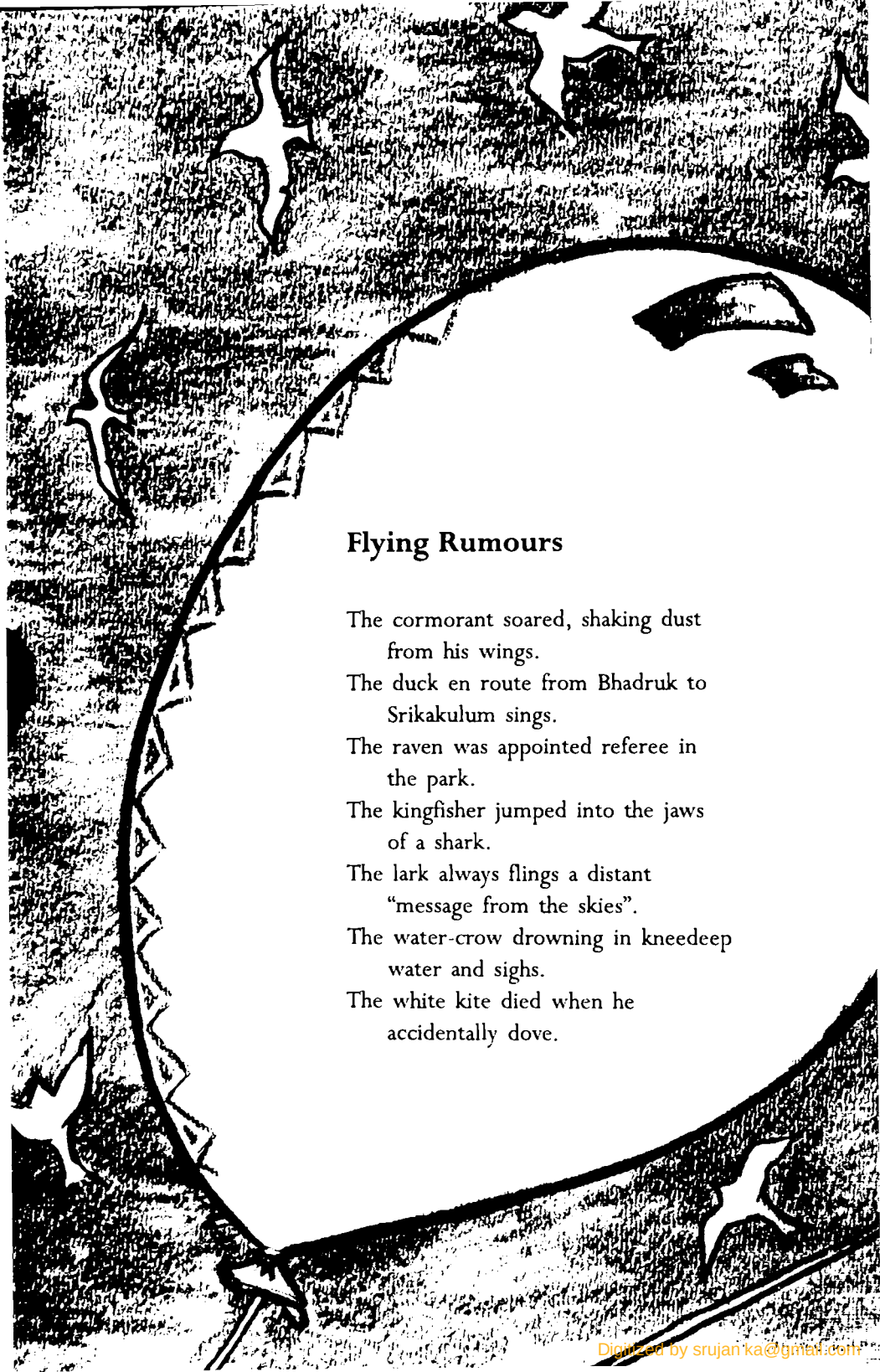
Staring through the car window,
the dog said, "Bow! Bow!"

His cool sahib said, "Now! Now!"

The country dog said, "Bhoh! Bhoh!"

His angry master shouted, "Oh, No!"





Flying Rumours

The cormorant soared, shaking dust
from his wings.

The duck en route from Bhadrak to
Srikakulum sings.

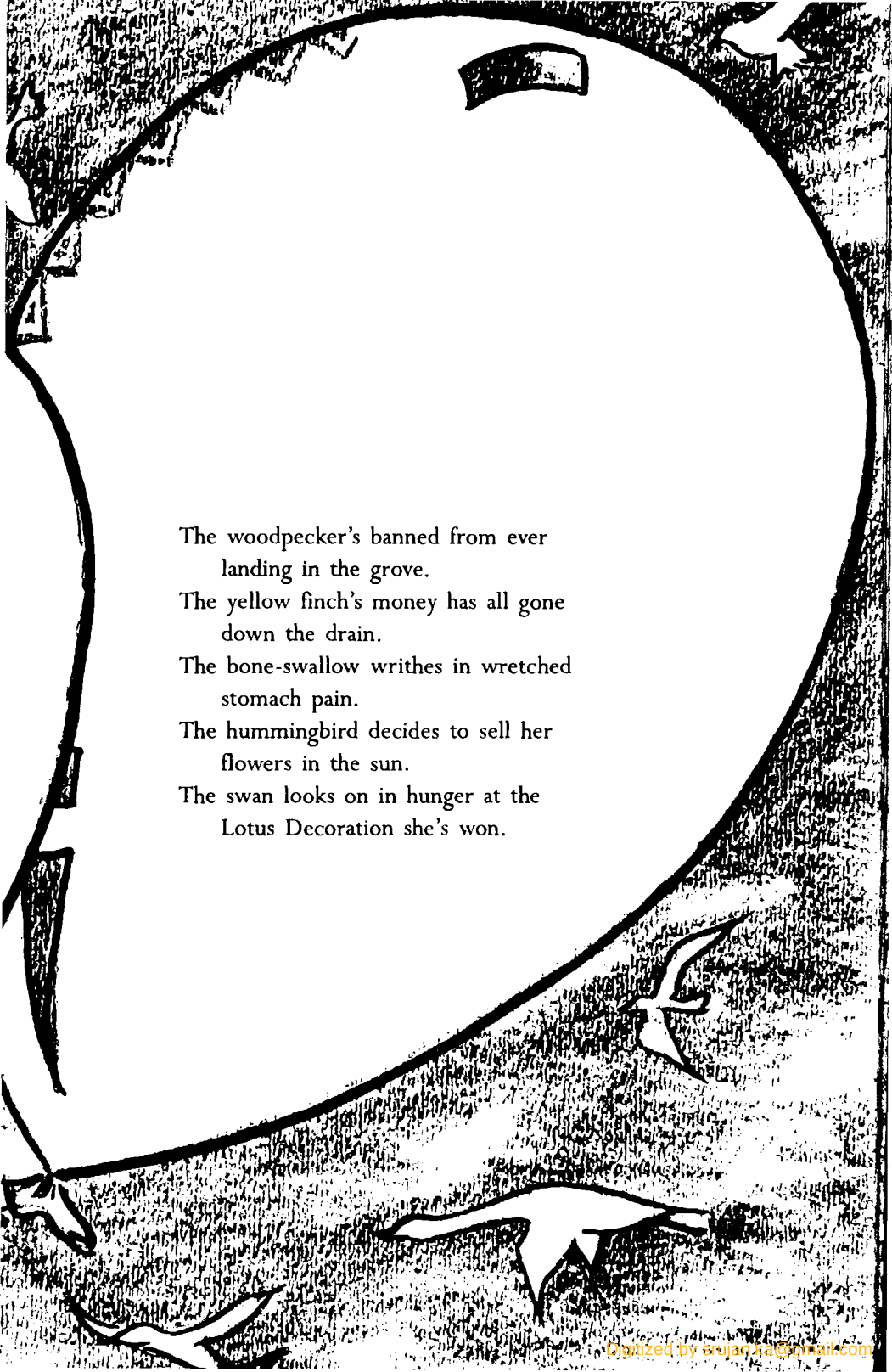
The raven was appointed referee in
the park.

The kingfisher jumped into the jaws
of a shark.

The lark always flings a distant
“message from the skies”.

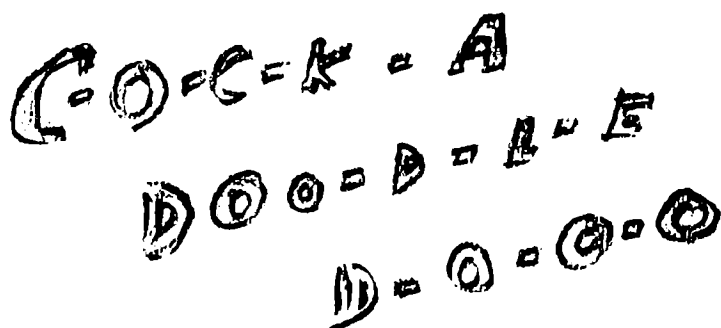
The water-crow drowning in kneedeep
water and sighs.

The white kite died when he
accidentally dove.



The woodpecker's banned from ever
landing in the grove.
The yellow finch's money has all gone
down the drain.
The bone-swallow writhes in wretched
stomach pain.
The hummingbird decides to sell her
flowers in the sun.
The swan looks on in hunger at the
Lotus Decoration she's won.





Vain Cock

Taught to say *ku-ku-du-koo*
 he only said, "cock-a-doodle-doo".

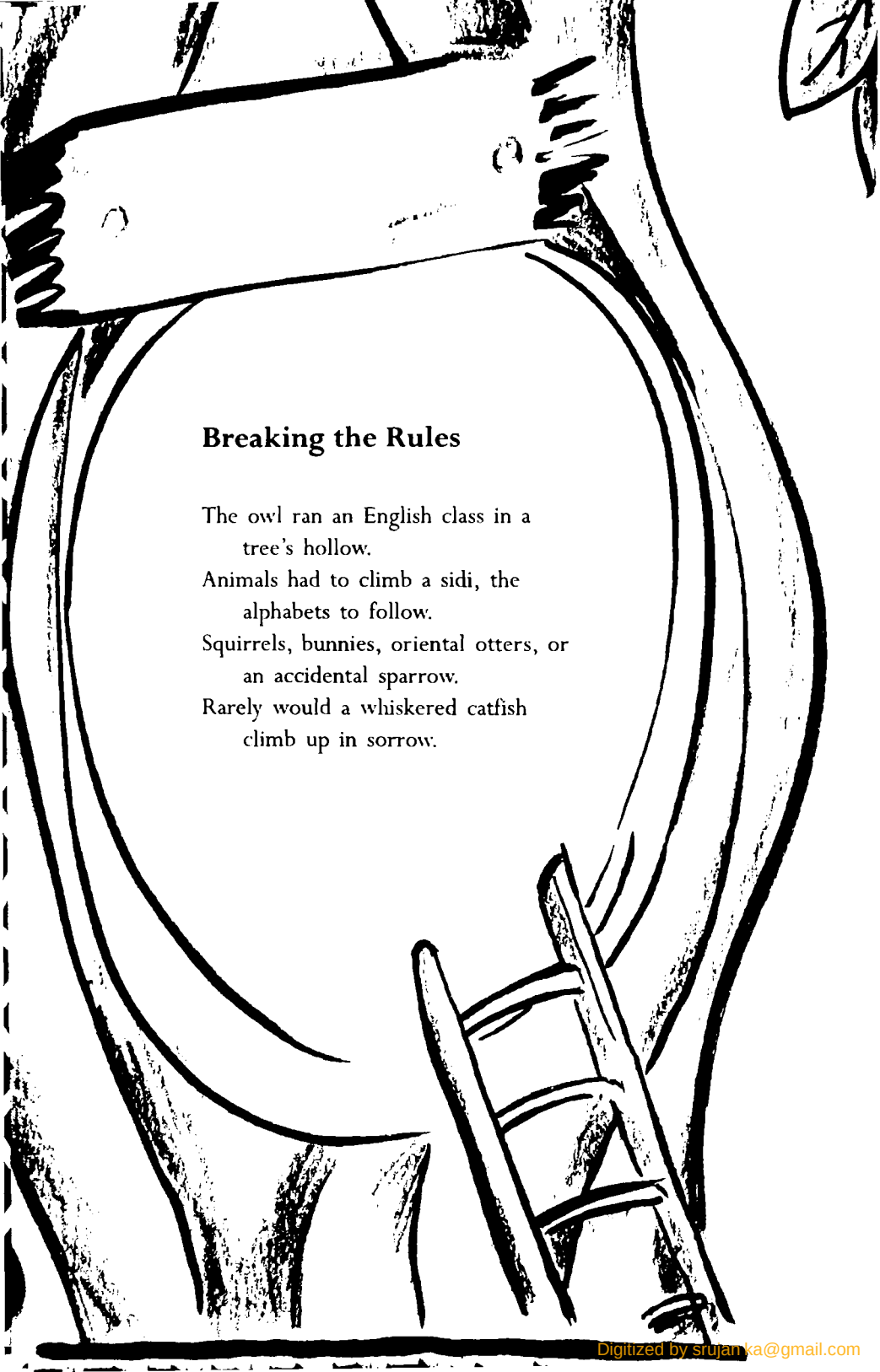
Vain cock!

You're in for a shock:
 not *tandoori*, you'll only be stew.

Fear Some

The goat is terrified of the tiger.
The tiger is frightened of the figer.
The figer is fearful of the goat—
They are all in the very same boat.



A stylized black and white illustration of a tree hollow. The hollow is a large, rounded opening in a tree trunk, with thick, dark lines representing the bark. A simple ladder with rungs is leaning against the right side of the hollow. The background is white, and the overall style is graphic and minimalist.

Breaking the Rules

The owl ran an English class in a
tree's hollow.

Animals had to climb a sidi, the
alphabets to follow.

Squirrels, bunnies, oriental otters, or
an accidental sparrow.

Rarely would a whiskered catfish
climb up in sorrow.

A mouse arrived late on a hot afternoon.
Skipping the sisi, he scampered up the tree
like a loon.

The owl scowled at him
For breaking the rule of the house.

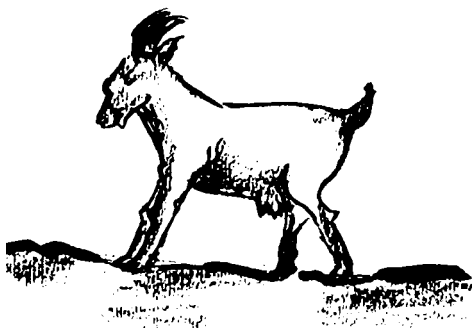
Pointing to the tree trunk
the mouse said, A B C D.





All the Best

Which is the hoarsest call?
The dog said, "Bhoh! Bhoh!"
Which is the best tobacco?
The jackal said, "Hookah, Ho!"
Which is the sweetest note?
The frog said, "kattarr kay!"
Which is the hottest month?
The goat said, "May, May!"



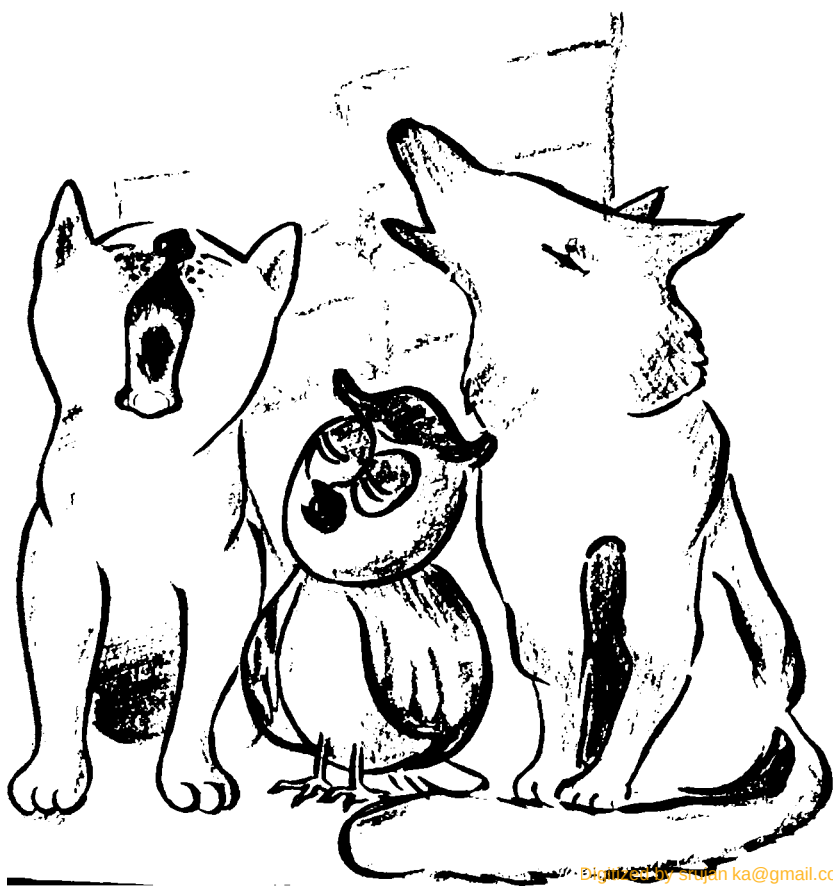
Rashtra Bhasha

Having just learnt the *rashtra bhasha*.

The jackal said, "Kya Hua?"

The owl said, "han, han, hun."

The cat said, "Main aoon."



Part II



MAN-ERRS



Transtraitor

Line by line, going by the book
he must rhyme by hook or crook.

 The end is rather odd,
 neither monkey nor god—
but a god-faced monkey by its look.

Defective Defection

Gayaram the defeated MLA
defected from Party B to party A.
Unable to get a portfolio,
back he decided to go
grumbling, "they're the same: Z to A."

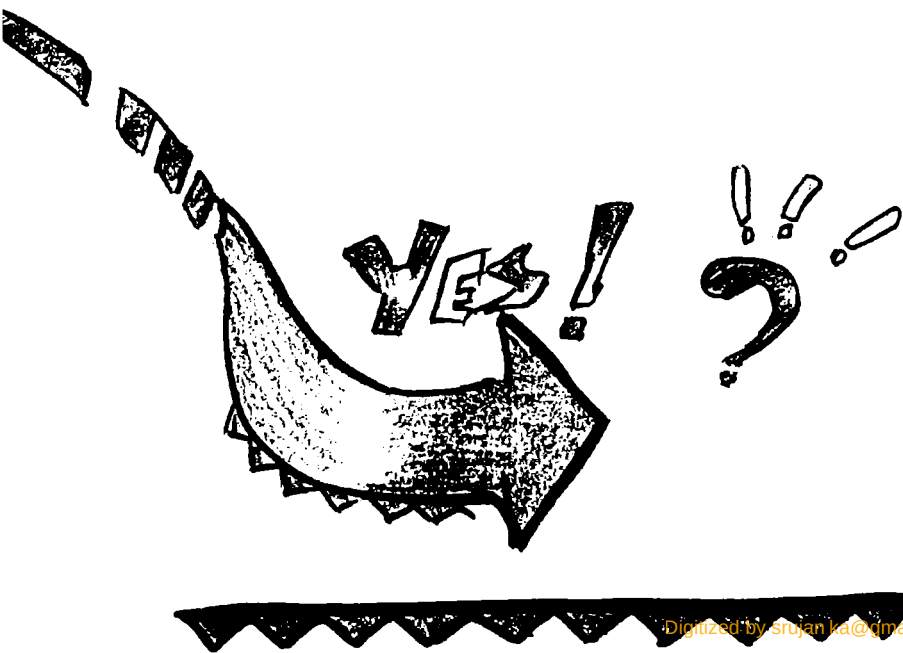






Babu Nabarang

Babu Nabarang of Barang
 is always good at harangue.
 If you're looking for his house,
 do not fret and grouse.
 Just turn left, then right,
 and then left, but not quite.
 They all know him, I swear,
 but a pity, when you reach there,
 you'll find he's nowhere!

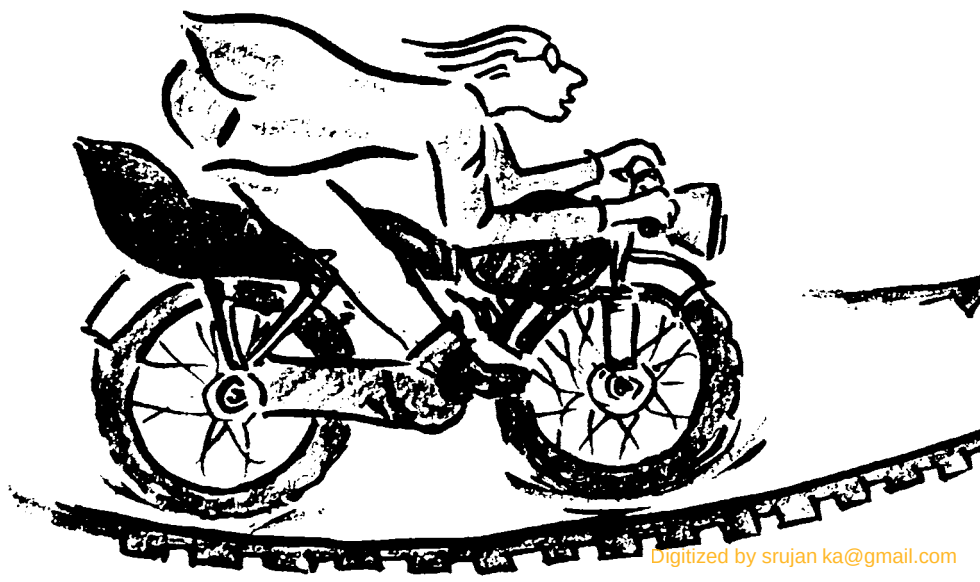
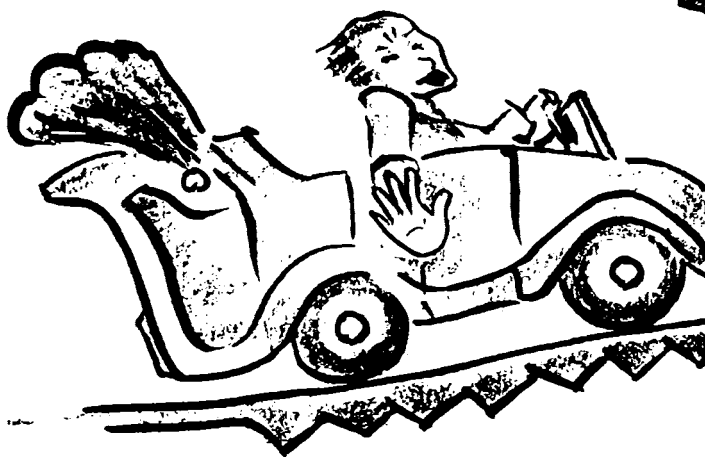




The Dead Letter

Begging for money in pitiable words
he wrote to his dad in express cards.
Alas! there was no relief to his plight,
but his letters now are a philatelic delight!

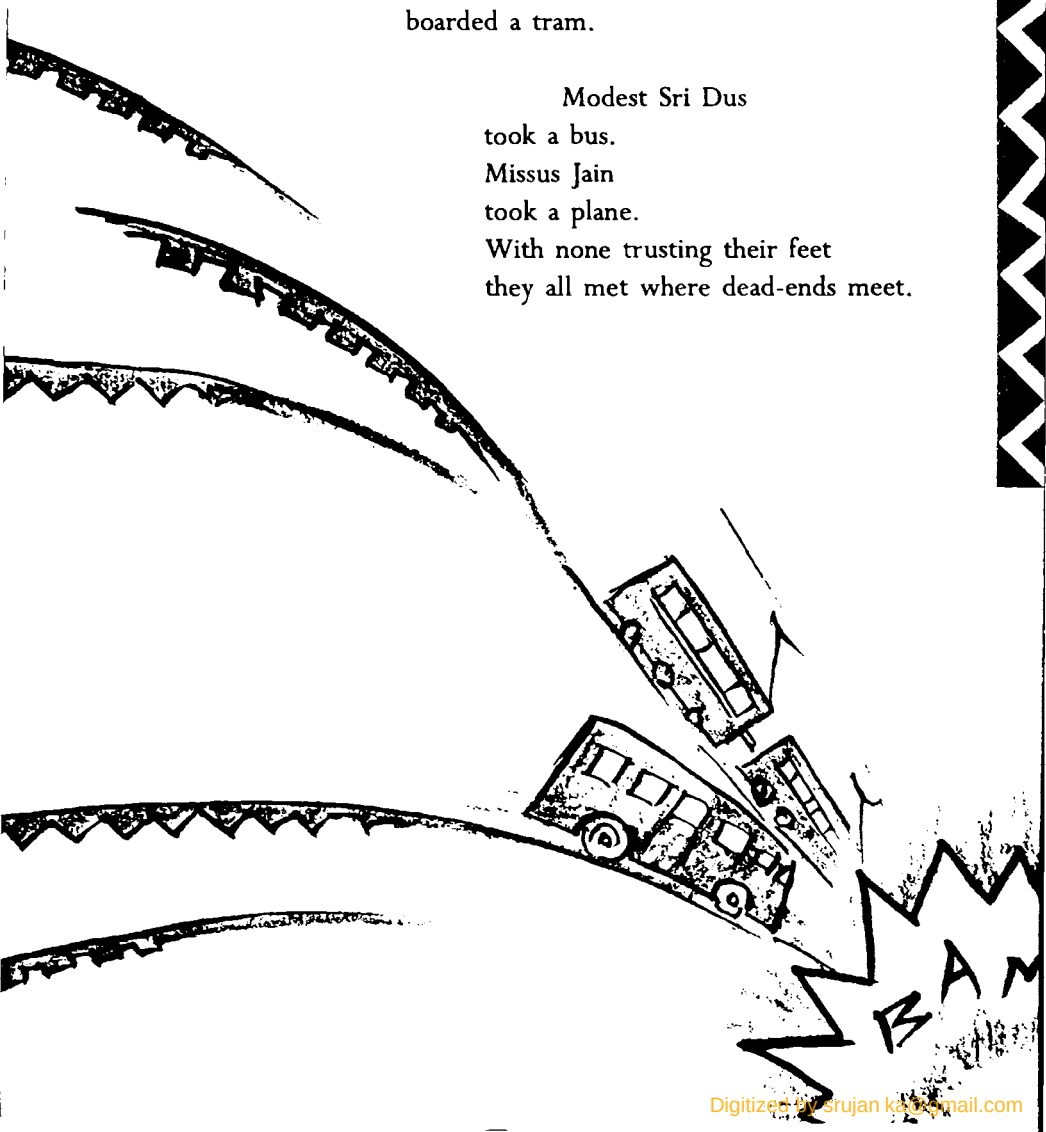




Loko-Motions

Babu Naik
sped on a bike.
Mister Kar
drove in a car.
Restive Ram
boarded a tram.

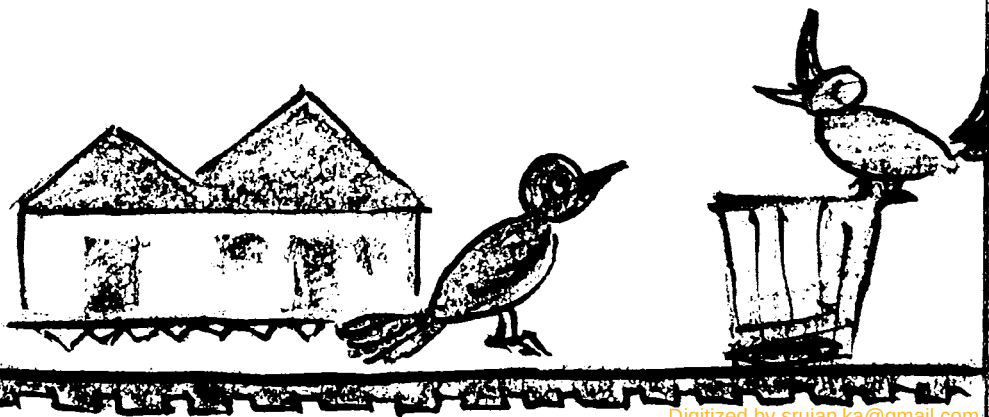
Modest Sri Dus
took a bus.
Missus Jain
took a plane.
With none trusting their feet
they all met where dead-ends meet.





Bollywood Bulu

Young Bulu fancied being a film-star
considering himself the best by far.
He landed in Bollywood.
But act he never could.
So, he decided to become a playback singer.

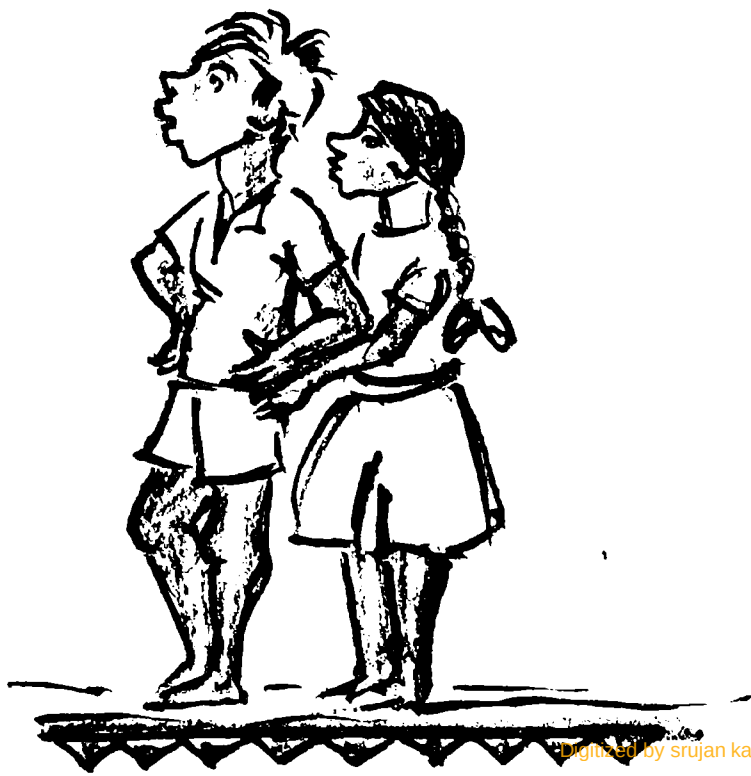




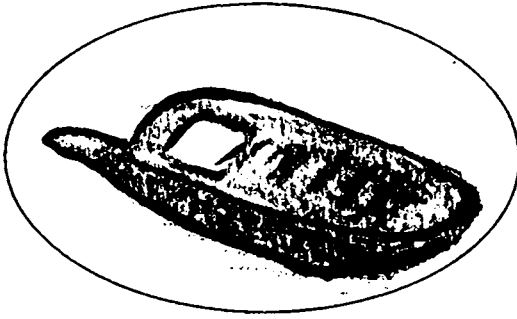
Ota of Aska

Ota of Aska set up a company.
The names sounded quite Japanese.

Delighted Ota learnt
Japanese in a month:
Ohaio Gojaimasu arigato tamany.







Foreign Rebound

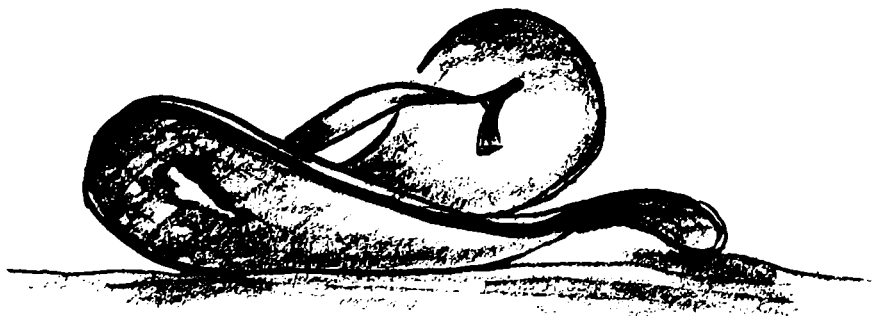
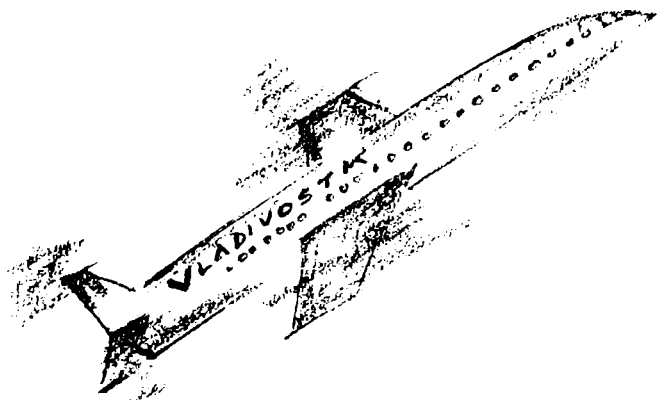
A Sanskrit teacher in a rural college
went abroad to improve his knowledge.

He returned triumphant
full of Plato and Kant,
but there was none to acknowledge.

Jobless from Cuttack

There was an unemployed youth of Cuttack,
whose job-hunting efforts came unstuck.

He walked his sandals off,
and said enough is enough,
and flew to Vladivostok.



One Night at the Dak-Bungalow

As I lay down on bed, and put out the lantern
Swarms of mosquitoes descended in a squadron.

They were about to whisk me away

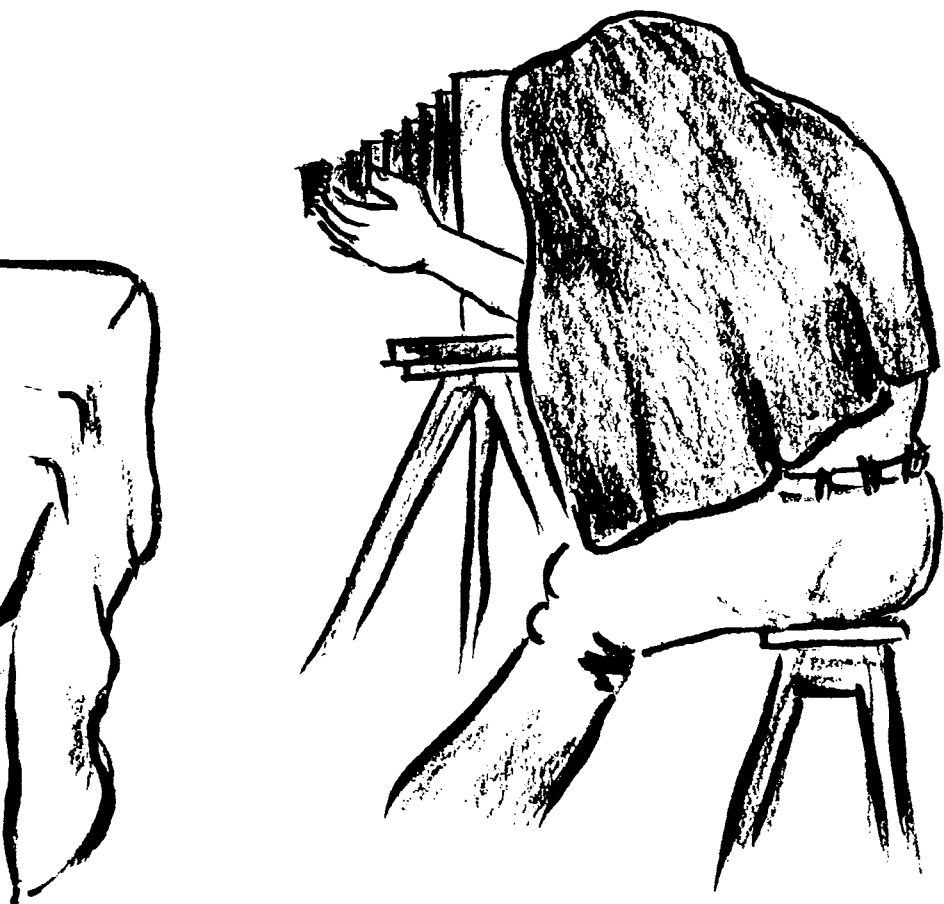
But I was pinned to the bed, where I lay
by millions of bedbug gathered in a platoon.





Verse and Worse

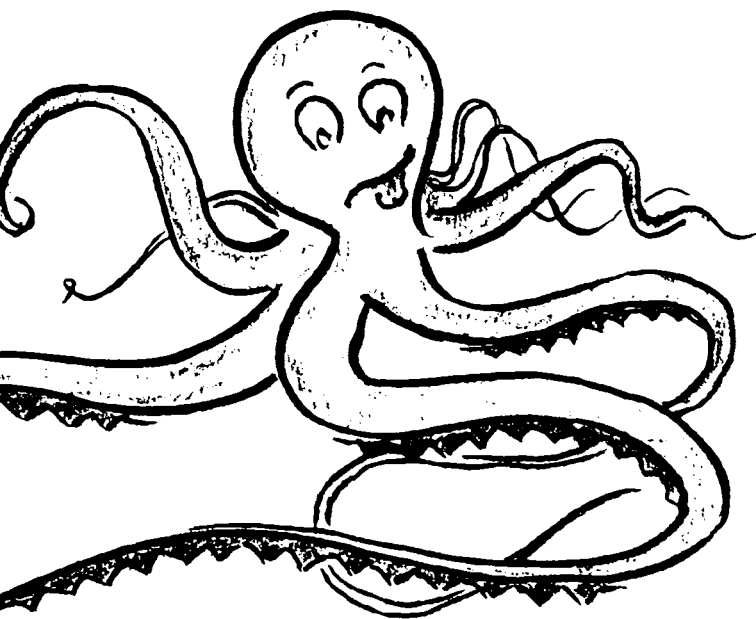
There was once a versifier, Rajee.
 An incorrigible rhymester was he.
 His favorite city was Benares.
 The fruit he preferred was anares;
 His beloved horse: Pegasus;
 and his dearest book: Thesaurus.

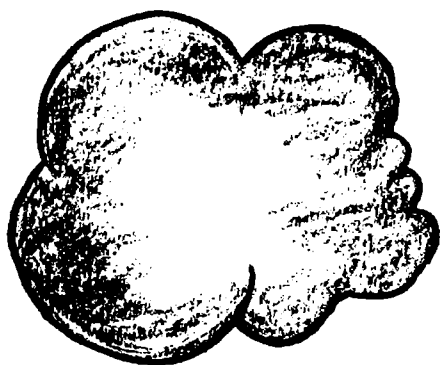




The Boy from Athgarh

Fast asleep at eight pm
the boy of eight had a dream.
Eight woodcutters were felling eight trees.
Eight gnomes were dancing on the frieze.
The octopus, spreading its eight tentacles
was all set to capture eight barnacles.
Just then eight banshees
with eight ghosts and eight pixies
tried to pull his breeches.
Waking up in a fright, he sees
guarding him were the eight presiding deities.
Now, there is nothing to fear, he felt.
Overcome by sleep, in deep sleep he slept.





The Reviewer //

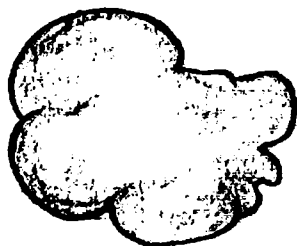
Looking for flaws on every page
he pores over the book for days.

The review he finally sends to the press
has of the book very little or less,
though full of quotations, ibids, and no praise.

3/

insert !!

X



Bhagirathi Bhaina

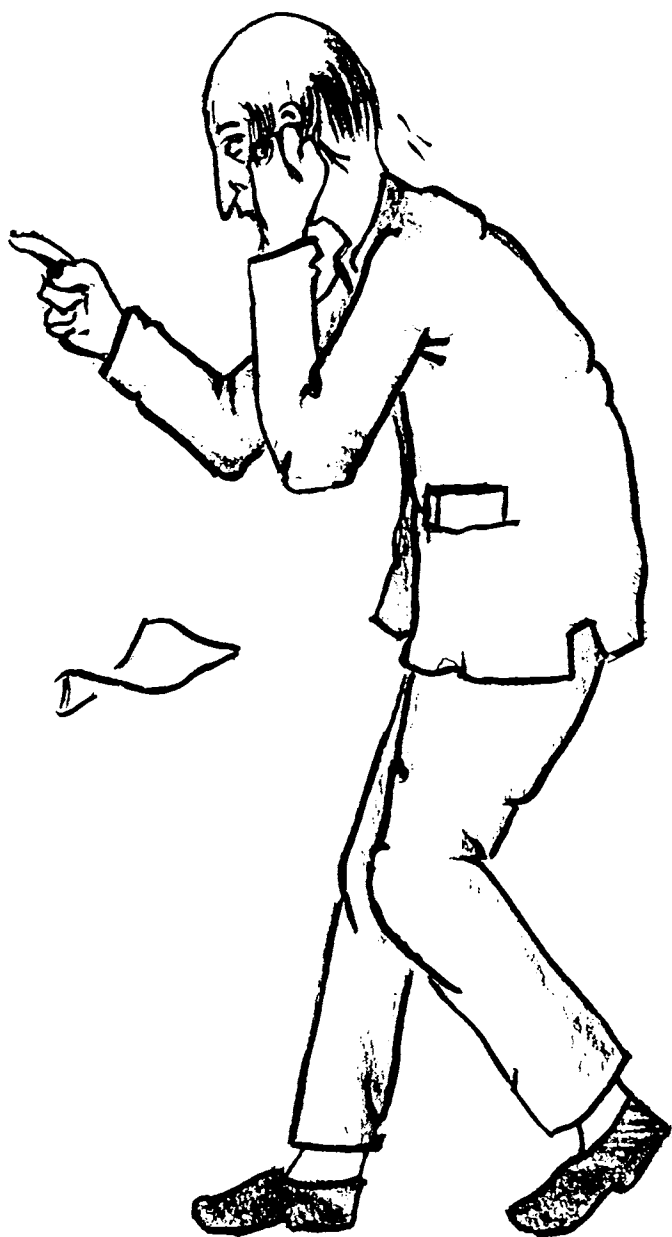
From Bhimkhol, one Bhagirathi Bhaina
 craved to go to China.
 A visa he didn't get,
 but since he was all set,
 he went to the zoo instead to look at the hyena.

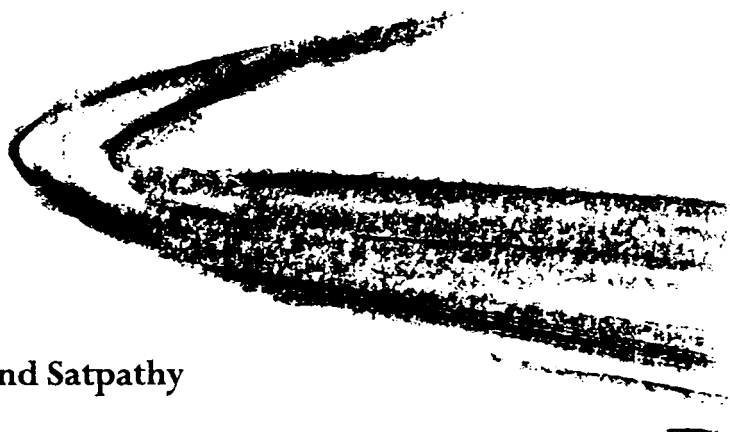


Professor Kar

Short of temper was Professor Kar.
Blood rushed to his head oft, therefar.
Mad with despair
he tore off his hair
and his head now is as bald as the Thar.





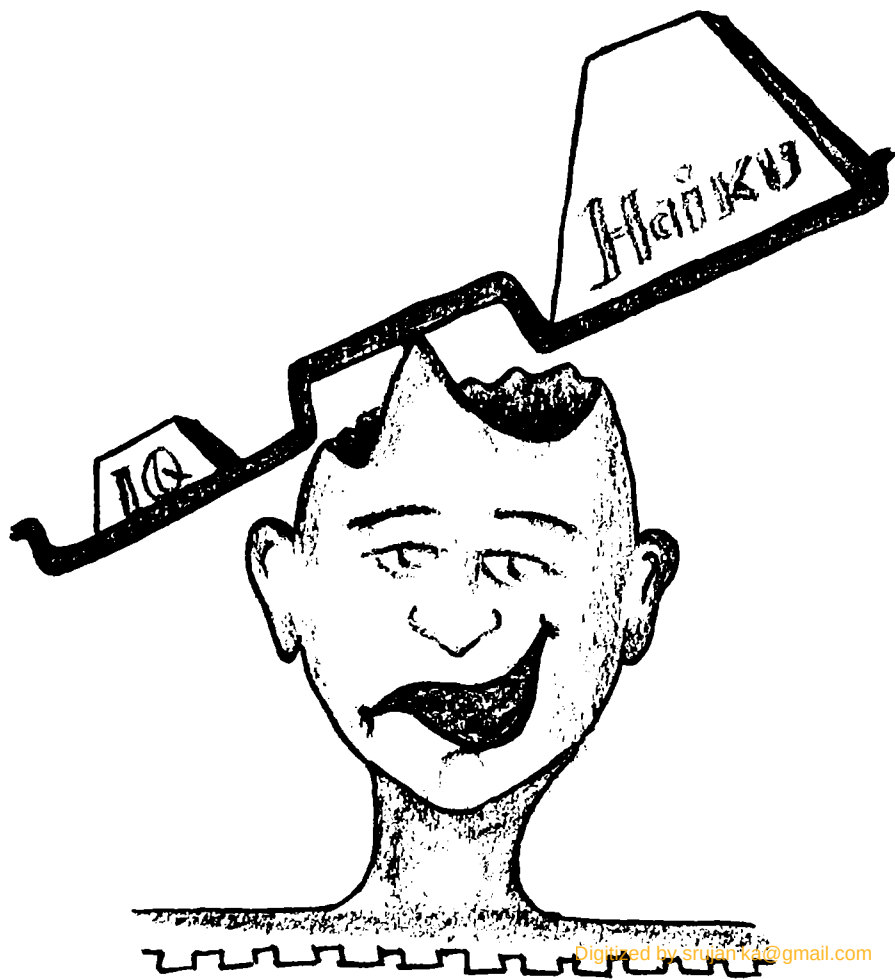


Sadanand Satpathy

He, of Sarankul, Sadanand Satpathy
went off riding his brand new phat-phati.

The red traffic light
he crossed with delight.
And thus did the babu attain sadgati.





Haiku

He asked his brother what shall I do?
His brother said, "You've such poor IQ!"
At which he sulked and left home,
and sat down to write a Haiku.

Simply Said

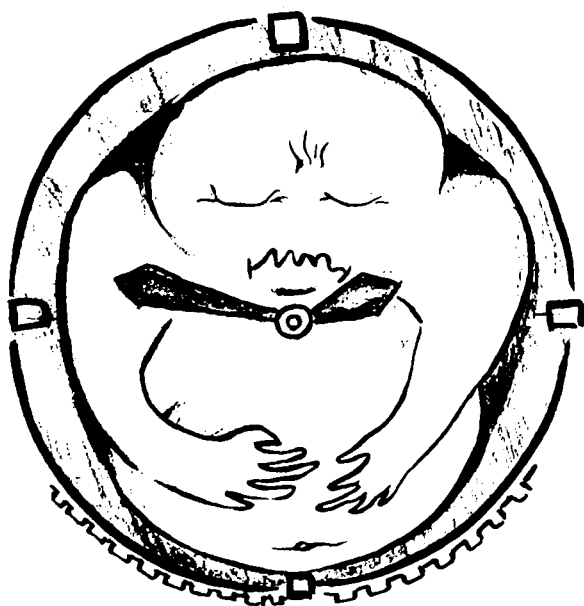
Diurnal is what daily means.
A long time means an eon.
Lexicon is what a dictionary is.
Dull is what we call monotone.
Simply said, sadness is lugubrious.
And telling lies is mendacious.





It Goes Thus

Clock strikes,
stomach gripes,
rumour goes,
heaven knows,
heart burns,
road turns,
mouth waters,
dream shatters,
time passes,
and life lapses.





Pains

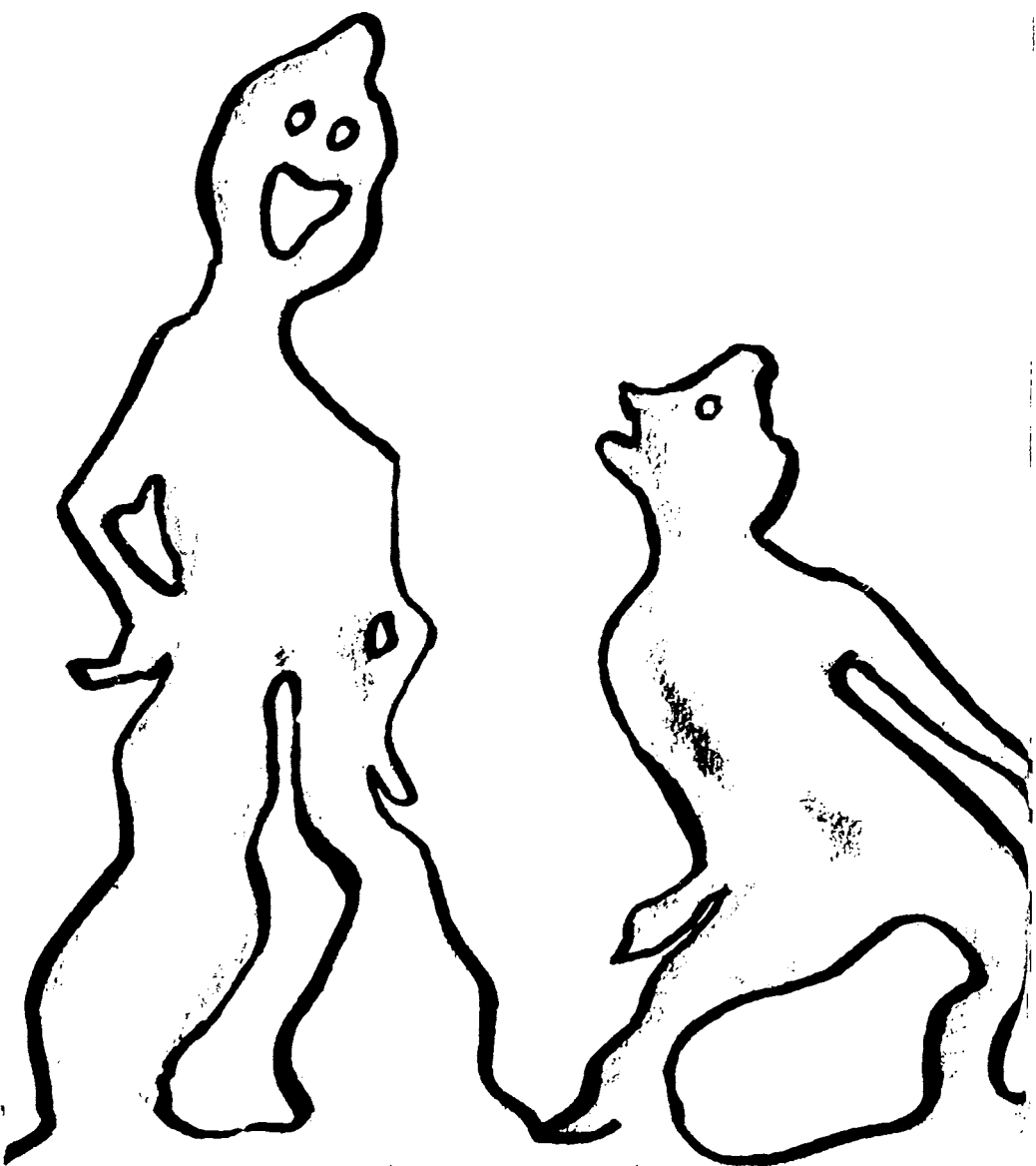
[After Ogden Nash]

Some pains are physical.

Some are fiscal.

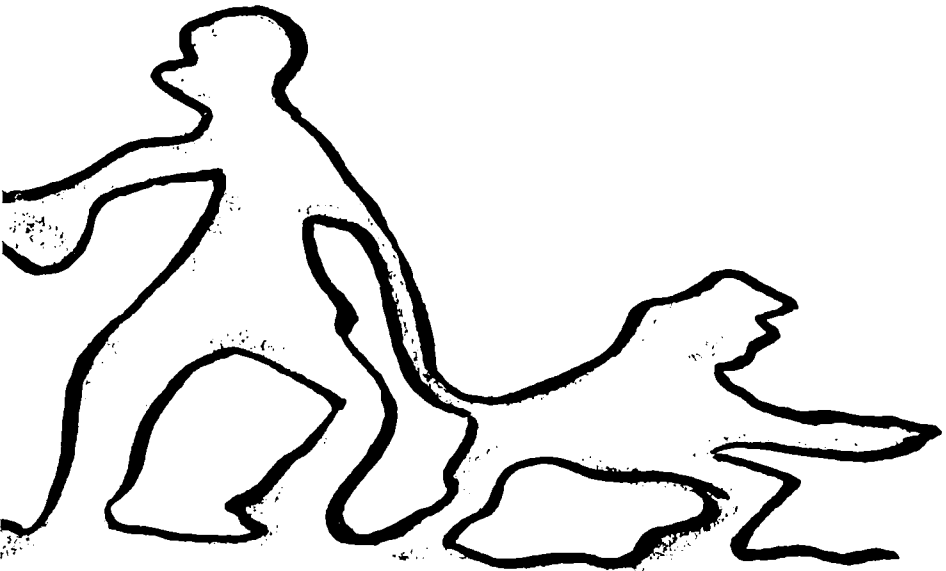
Some are mental.

But the pain that
surpasses all is dental.



Nanabaya

Kakabaya, Kakua, Kakamina
 are petrified before the horrible
 Dhusardhuma.
 Chirguni, Pishachuni, Dahani,
 Kundabhusundi
 can really kick up a shindy.
 However, the one whose howl
 Strikes terror in them all away
 In all fairness, I must say,
 is Yetiji, I bow to thee, namaste, namaste!



At Home

The palace is where His Highness dwells.
The ghost haunts the tumble down house.
Thieves must live in dingy cells.
A hole is home to the little mouse.

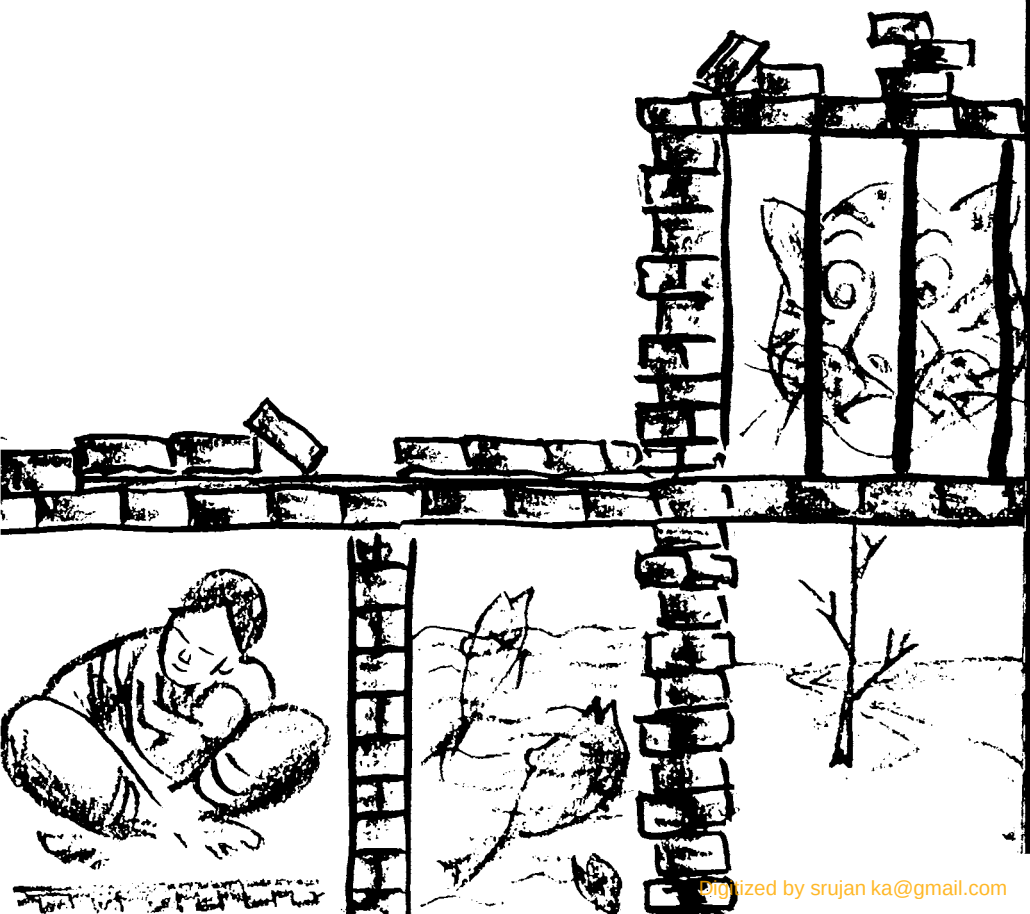
The tortoise carries its home on its back.
The bird builds and lives in its nest.
The farmer lives in his tattered shack.
The lair suits the bear best.

The squirrel digs to live in a burrow.
Bees hum around and live in the hive.
Sages meditate in caves, dark and narrow.
The squirrels into the tree's hollow dive.



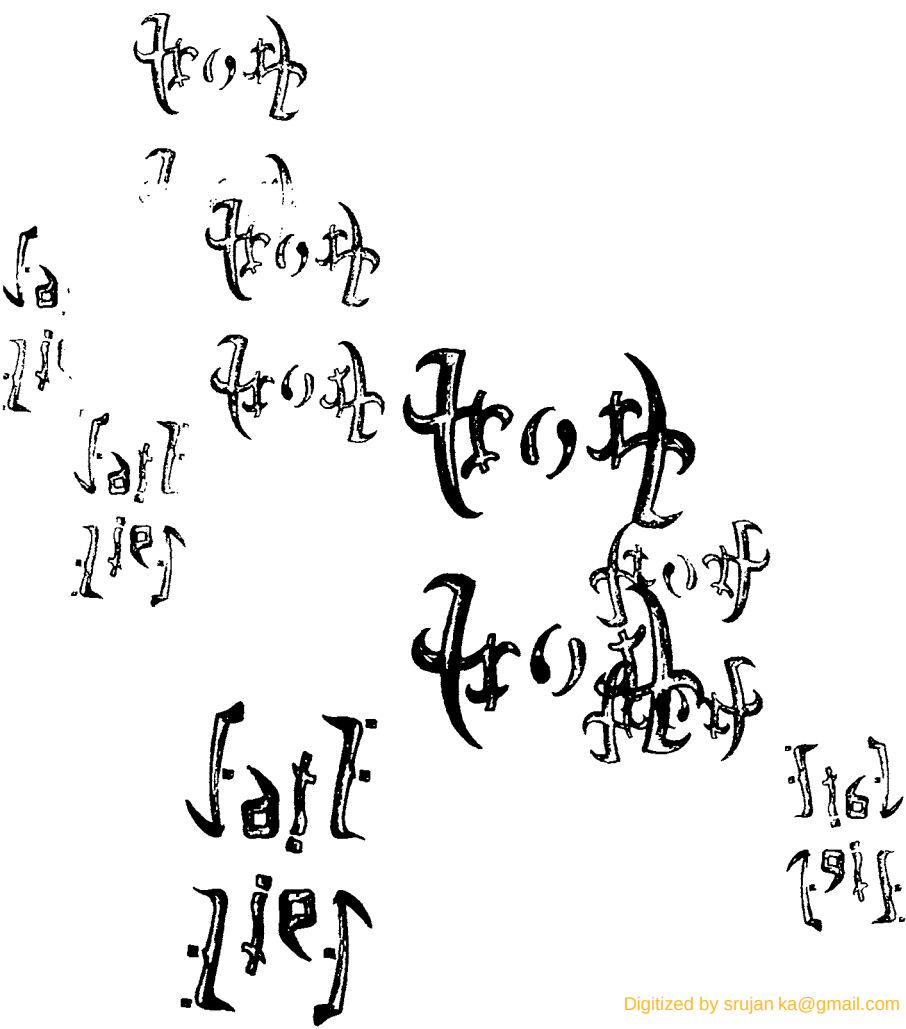
The satchel is home to the girl's books.
The baby snuggles in mommy's arm.
Frogs and fish live in ponds and brooks.
Eyelids hold the dreams that charm.

But, the footpath is no home for men.
The animals' home is never the zoo.
If the cage isn't a bird's home, then
nobody's home is the prison too.



True Lies

Take it from me,
 dear listeners,
 that this alone is true:
 All that I say
 is utterly untrue.



NOTES



PART I BEASTORIES

The Clever Jackal

The Clever Jackal: This nonsense rhyme recalls and combines two popular Oriya rhymes:

One begins with and literally translates to “It is sunny, and it is rainy / brother jackal is getting married”; and the other with “Brother jackal! Look back! Your house is on fire!”

The Story of a Macaque

Cuttaque: Bowdlerized version of Cuttack, a place name in Orissa.

Ferry Query

After a popular Oriya folk-puzzle

The standard answer is that the boatman first takes the goat to the other side, leaving the tiger behind with the betel leaves, which will be safe with the tiger. He next takes the tiger across and brings back the goat. He takes the betel leaves next and leaves them with the tiger, and, finally, goes back to ferry the goat across. He has thus made four trips in all.

All the Best

Bhoh! Bhoh: A Sanskrit form of address akin to “hello!” This is also how the barking of a dog is represented in Oriya.

Hookah, Ho: Oriya for referring to a jackal howling. **Kattarr kay:** Oriya for referring to a frog’s croaking. **May, May:** Oriya for referring to a goat’s bleating.

Rashtra Bhasha

Rashtra Bhasha: The National language

Kya Hua: The howling of a jackal is represented by this sound in Oriya folk culture. In Hindi it means: “what happened?”

Han, han, hun: The hooting of a howl as represented in Oriya folk culture. In Hindi, it also means, “yes, yes. I am here”

Main aoon: The mewing of a cat as represented in Oriya. In Hindi it also means, “May I come in?”

Breaking the Rules

Sidi: Signifies a ladder in many Indian languages, including Hindi and Oriya.

ABCD: When spoken to a Hindi or Oriya audience, these first four letters in the English alphabet will also sound like *yeh bhi sidi*, which means “This too is a ladder.” (In Oriya too it would carry the same meaning)

Vain Cock

Ku-ku-du-ku: Oriya/Hindi equivalent of “cock-a-doodle-doo.”

Flying Rumours

Flying Rumours: The term “flying rumours” is a translation of the Oriya word

Uda-Khabar: the original title of JP Das’s rhyme. Whereas *khabar* means “news,” *uda khabar* is rumour; *uda* meaning that which has flown.

Shaking dust from his wings: This first line is a reworking of a popular Oriya folk song.

Message from the skies: Literally translated, this is also the Hindi/Oriya name of Oriya All India Radio.

bone-swallow: *Hadagila*, the name of the bird in Oriya translated literally.

Padma-Bhushan: a prestigious Indian state award literally translates into the “Lotus Decoration”.

Part II
MAN-ERRS

Babu Nabarang

Barang: A place name in Orissa

Loko-Motions

Loko-Motions: In Oriya the word *loko* means 'people'

Ota of Aska

Aska: A place name in Orissa

O Japanee riya: Hindi for Japanese

Ohaio Gojaimasu arigato tamany: Japanese words meaning 'good morning,' 'thank you,' and 'some time.'

Verse and Worse

Anares: Oriya for pineapple

Athgarh

Athagarh: A place name, literally meaning a place with eight forts (from *aath*, or eight and *garh*, that is fort)

Eight presiding deities: eight presiding deities of the eight directions, literal translation of *ashtadigapalas*.

Professor Kar

The Thar: The Thar desert, a desert spanning from Pakistan to northern India.

Sadanand Satpathy

Sarankul: a village in Orissa.

Phat-phati: Motorbike: An onomatopoeic coinage, imitating its putt-putting sound.

Sadgati: The rites of passage to death.

Nanabaya

Yetiji: Yeti, a name commonly used by people indigenous to the Himalayan region of Nepal and Tibet, and is part of their history and mythology. *Ji* is honorific for respected people in Hindi, often used for humorous effect.

Looking for flaws on every page
he pores over the book for days.
The review he finally sends to the press
has of the book very little or less,
though full of quotations, ibids, and no praise.

mscst !!

X

9/

Puns wordplays riddles rhymes
mark this delightful collection of nonsense verses.
Originally written in Odia, this fine English rendition
brings to you a glimpse of
India's rich tradition of literary nonsense.



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